The Shooting Times and Country Magazine—April 29, 1955

A SHORT HISTORY OF GROUSE SHOOTING by Henry Fletcher

The SHOOTING TIMES and Country Magazine

SEVENTY-THIRD YEAR FRIDAY, APRIL 29th, 1955 1s 3d. WEEKLY

HEALTHY STOCK

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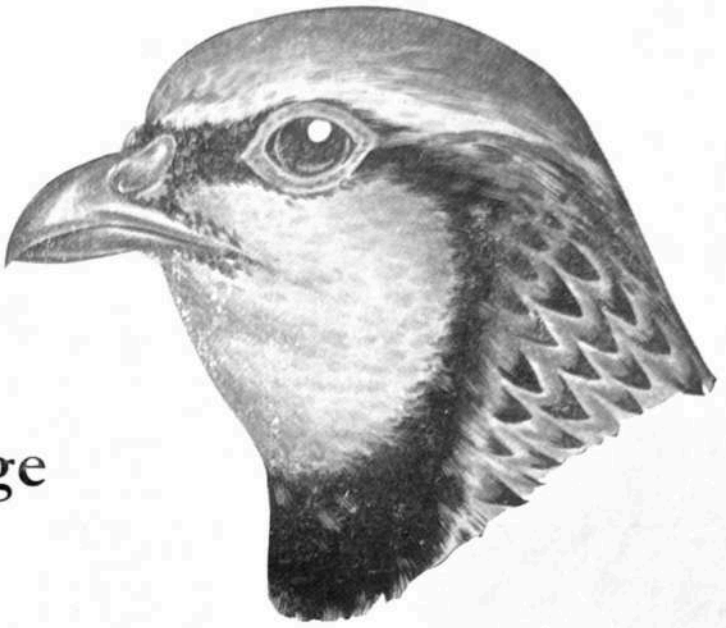

Red-Legged or French Partridge

(*Alectoris r. rufa*)

This droll and handsome partridge (more closely related to the Eastern Chukor than to the European partridge) with its bright red beak and legs, and its showy, barred patches of black, white and chestnut, is perhaps a misunderstood bird. Admittedly it deserved its bad reputation in the days when partridges were shot over dogs, owing to its preference for using its legs rather than its wings. Whilst the pointer was on point the partridge would sneak silently away, completely baffling both dog and shooter. This ploy might be repeated two or three times, much to the fury of the hunter. As a driven bird, however, it provides good sport.

The species was first supposed to have been introduced into the parks of Richmond and Windsor in 1673—at the suggestion of Charles II's Gamekeeper—but it was not until a hundred years later that the really successful introduction was made in Suffolk which resulted in their becoming established.

The "Red-leg" is more cosmopolitan than our native species. It thrives on rough scrubland, sandy heaths and chalk downs, as well as on heavy fen soils and marshland. It is inclined to perch in bushes and on walls, and will sometimes nest off the ground in such places as hay ricks. Otherwise its habits are much the same as those of our own partridge.

Although it has been accused of pugnacity we have never seen a French partridge attack an English bird: indeed when they are reared together it is usually the English partridges which bully the "Red-legs". We have also known the two species to nest side by side. Oddly enough the hen will sometimes make two nests, one of which is incubated by herself and the other by the cock—the latter assuming decidedly shy and ladylike behaviour during this period. Clutches of eggs have been deserted for as long as six weeks, after which the parent bird has returned to hatch out every egg. Truly an eccentric creature, but unworthy of all the nasty things that are said about it at shooting luncheons!

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

THE young shooter who has been at home during the last four or five weeks will have extended his knowledge and experience of *safe* shooting. Particularly, perhaps, towards the end of his holidays when, with trees and bushes coming out, that "leafy screen" has become a feature of the countryside. For of those famous verses entitled *A Father's Advice*, there is no more vital verse than the following: "Stops and beaters, oft unseen, lurk behind some leafy screen. Calm and steady always be, never shoot where you can't see."

The youth who has had the good fortune to spend hours after vermin during Easter—it may be with .22 rifle or air rifle—should have developed a sense of *safe background*. Which is roughly the sense always, before taking a shot, to ask oneself this question: "What lies beyond that hedge?" For one of our dangers (and it is a danger which is on the increase in this greatly over-populated country) is that the shooter is seldom far from a road, house or place where people pass or are likely to be. Or where horses, cattle, or sheep may be out at pasture.

Rabbit shooting was perhaps safer in this respect as the line of fire was directed towards the ground. Now that the young shot has to be educated without the help of rabbits, greater attention than ever needs to be paid to background. In the First World War a soldier on parade well behind the line on the Western Front fell dead from a bullet which had been fired, it was always thought, irresponsibly by one of his comrades. The same sort of accident can always happen here at home, especially when it is realised that a .22 bullet can be a source of danger for something like three-quarters of a mile!

A pigeon sitting in a low bush, a magpie in an apple tree, a crow on a fence bordering a road—these are the kind of shots which may prove dangerous. Indeed it is extremely doubtful whether such a shot as that presented by the crow—tempting though it certainly would be—should ever be attempted in a populous countryside. More especially during the spring and summer months when motorists seem to invade every road and lane. Indeed the wisdom of the use of a rifle in *any* road-bordered field is questionable.

Coming to actual shooting parties in the season proper, it is the *duty* of every armed participant to ascertain the position of all stops and beaters and to keep his knowledge up to date. For what may be a safe angle early in a drive can easily become a dangerous one later on. In this respect the shooting of low birds calls for especial precaution. Low pheasants in heavily-wooded country where thick hedges abound are usually best left alone in such circumstances—apart from the fact that they may be unsporting to shoot. As for woodcock, these birds are not *necessarily* difficult. The difficulty so often lies in securing a safe chance at them.

The young shot, however, may have learned a lot that will serve him well in days to come. The main necessity is to give such thought and attention to the matter that it becomes an automatic part of the self. When such is the case, temptation to take an unsafe shot does not, or should not, enter into the case . . . safety measure, it must be emphasised, must become automatic—almost a sixth sense.

* * *

MOVING TARGET RIFLE SHOOT

On Sunday, May 1, the Running Deer Range at Bisley will be open to members and visitors to the Bisley Clay Pigeon Shooting Club, who would like to try their hand at moving target rifle shooting. Previous experience is not essential. After you have had your first 25 birds on the clay pigeon range, you are invited to walk down to the running deer range, which is about 300 yards from the Club, and fire 15 rounds at various stationary and moving targets. Rifles will be provided and a total charge of 5s. will be made. The object of this shoot, which is sponsored by the N.R.A., is to find men who are enthusiastic and who would be willing to enter upon a short training programme that would enable the N.R.A. and other organisations to pick teams for the World Championships, the European Championships, the Hanover Shoot, and, the supreme honour of all, the Olympic Games. If you know anyone who might like to attend this trial shoot please tell them of these arrangements. If you have your own rifle and would prefer to use it, take it with you. If it has a 4-power telescope it will be especially useful.

THE N. AMERICAN WILDLIFE CONFERENCE

Nearly 1,000 persons, including internationally-known authorities on the management of renewable natural resources, conservation administrators, biologists, and representatives of sportsmen's organisations, attended the 20th North American Wildlife Conference that was held in the Sheraton-Mount Royal at Montreal, Quebec, from March 14 through March 16, according to the conference sponsor, the Wildlife Management Institute. Represented in the registered attendance were people from all the states, provinces of Canada, Alaska, Mexico, South Africa, and the British West Indies. The theme of this year's international meeting was "Natural Resources Use—A Continental Challenge." Dr. A. W. Trueman presided as chairman of the opening general session, assisted by Stanley G. Fontanna. The conferees were welcomed to Canada by the Honorable Jean Lesage, Canadian Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources. The closing general session featured a discussion of the topic, Waterfowl — Flyway Management Problems. Angus Gavin, general manager, Ducks Unlimited (Canada), was the session chairman and John M. Anderson, superintendent, Winous Point Shooting Club, Ohio, was vice-chairman. Speakers at this session were T. A. McAmis, chairman, National Waterfowl Council, and executive secretary, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission; Ernest Swift, assistant director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; D. A. Munro and J. Bernard Gollop, chief ornithologist and wildlife management officer respectively, Canadian Wildlife Service; Joseph J. Hickey, associate professor, University of Wisconsin; and E. L. Paynter, game commissioner, Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources. On the evening of March 15, more than 500 persons gathered in the ballroom of the Sheraton-Mount Royal Hotel for the annual conference banquet. Each of the nearly 60 papers that were presented, the discussions that followed from the floor, and the names of all conference registrants were recorded and will appear in the printed Transactions of the 20th North American Wildlife Conference. Copies will be available upon publication at cost, from the Wildlife Management Institute.

MORIBUND CANALS

A report of the Board of Survey on the canals and waterways of Great Britain (published in April by the British Transport Commission) gives a list of 26 canals or sections of canals which, it is said, now involve a dead loss of about £200,000 a year. It considers that the 771 miles of canal affected do not have sufficient commercial prospects to justify their retention for navigation. The Transport Commission agrees and states that specific proposals are being prepared. Three hundred and thirty-six miles of waterways are to be developed and 994 miles will be retained for the present. The intention of the Commission to abandon certain canals has been mooted for several months: this report contains the first really detailed information on the subject and it is likely to increase the weight of opposition to the measure. Opposition to the closure or abandonment of canals comes from many individuals and bodies, among whom the strongest rallying points are the Inland Waterways Association and the vast body of British anglers.

OLYMPIC GAMES

Fly, bait and lure competition casting is well established in the United States, where selected members of some 170 casting clubs join with individual contestants in an annual national casting contest. Efforts are being made by American casting club officials to persuade the Olympic Games Committee to include six casting events in the schedule of Olympic Games contests. Their main difficulty is to draw up rules that will satisfy American standards and still be acceptable to Continental casters. Great Britain has some excellent amateur and professional casters, and a British team should make a good showing, if casting is ever included in the Games.

Three Crows

by Tower-Bird

THE first of these crows was no crow at all, and therefore should not rightly be included in the title of this article. I had been down to the marshes looking for someone else's boat which had gone adrift towards the end of the fowling season and had not since been seen. I had an idea where she might be found. On my way back, I saw a crows' nest, and next evening made a rather difficult stalk towards it — rather difficult, because there were several pigeon sittting in the willow in which the nest was built. Also, the approach set a problem owing to the isolation of the said tree.

I had no real idea whether the old bird was sitting, but, on the previous day, I had seen a single crow, which I took to be the cock, rise from the centre of a piece of marshland not far from the tree and fly silently away. Thus, I hoped the hen was sitting hard and that I might catch her on the nest, providing she was facing in the right-direction-for-me, and the-wrong-direction-for-her. Foolishly, I forgot to take along my telescope.

As I approached the tree, the pigeon flew out in a long streamer (there were over thirty of them) while I was still some way off. As they departed, I sat down on a bank and waited for a quarter of an hour, to allow the crow's suspicion to subside. I then advanced and finally saw a blunt tail protruding over the edge of the nest. Quickly I took the cartridge from my right barrel and inserted in its place a "bird-scaring" one (my name for the war-time issue). The idea was to fire at the nest, and then to kill the fleeing crow with a good cartridge. Having got almost under the nest, and in a position that I thought the best to get a clear shot as the crow left, I fired at the structure—and nothing happened. The square tail was not, in fact, a tail at all, and I hoped that I had not broken any eggs. I hope, in fact, that my next visit will find the hen sitting hard, and facing the right-for-me-direction, and the-wrong-for-her-one.

New Use for Pigeon Decoys

The second crow was a very real one, and perhaps someone can explain why she built in a short oak in which there has been a crows' nest for at least the past three seasons. Apart from the first two seasons I dealt with the nest, last spring I killed four crows to it. And when I write "the nest" I should perhaps make it clear that each season after the crows have been destroyed, the nest has gradually rotted, until, with the coming of spring, the last sticks have been scattered or used for a new nest, but the new nest has always been on a different bough

As I made my way along the deer track under this year's nest, I noted that it was fully built, but there were no signs of its architect—until I had crossed the adjoining meadow, when I saw an old crow hurrying back towards it. "She must be sitting hard," I said to myself, since she returns towards her home while I am still in view. Wait till tomorrow." On the morrow, when I was still several hundred yards away, I saw her slip from the nest. And I smiled. For on the previous day there had come to me an idea (the result of keen observation) which I thought would bring her to book, without the aid of a second party walking away while I crouched in a hide.

For on the previous day I had, as I sat in a hedge watching my pigeon decoys, seen a cowman walk across a meadow on a neighbouring estate, and noted a crow leave a nest as he approached a boundary of elms. Less than half-an-hour later, I saw four pigeon fly down on to the meadow not far from the site of the crows' nest. Almost at once, as the pigeon fed, the old crow returned *direct* to her nest, and it became obvious to me that she regarded the feeding pigeon as a sure sign of safety. She came flying low across the grass and went straight to her nesting tree. I saw and I noted, and the idea was born.

So, on this morning, when I saw my own crow slip away, I continued walking towards her nest, under which, most conveniently, there is a natural hide of dead bracken propped up by brambles. I backed into this, made it comfortable, sat Don in it and left my bag there while I jumped the ditch into the adjoining meadow and there set out a group of pigeon decoys. The old crow, in the meantime, was "over the hill"—a steep, bracken-covered slope—and out of sight. Having set up my stand of decoys, I retired to the hide and waited. Twice I saw the crow fly round at a distance, but, in less than twenty minutes, and having spied the feeding "pigeon," she

A crow arriving at the nest.

must have forgotten the mystery of my disappearance, and along she came to the nest, offering an easy shot. I wonder how many more crows I shall get to this particular nest in the next week or two.

The third crow honestly deserves to live (?)—at least that is the way I regard it, since she made a darned fool of me. Her nest was high up in a willow, and I had caught a glimpse of her slipping off it and away three times. And each time, as I presently looked back from high ground, I saw her returning to her eggs. Here, again, there was a good, natural hide within range of the nest, but, bracken to the right and water to the left, there was no good place for setting out pigeon decoys.

Three-Hour Vigil

So on a morning when sunrise had vanquished a white frost and the promise of a hot day showed in a cloudless blue sky, Don and I went to squat in the hide and there remained for close on three hours—happy, but a little cramped. Once or twice a crow flew round (the cock, I suppose, though, at the time, I thought it to be the hen). The sun climbed the clear heavens and its warmth was comforting. Even so, three hours can pass slowly. True, there was much to be observed. We saw pigeon fly over, circle and settle on a meadow in the not far middle distance. Rooks and jackdaws were running a shuttle service to and from a small rookery in some elms on the skyline. A pair of reed-buntings looked as though they were house-hunting, and a small party of house-martins skimmed the water.

For some time I watched with interest a tiny spider which crept to the top of a high stalk of bracken not far from my nose. It made several walks up and down, and finally threw itself from the pinnacle, only to be pulled up sharp by its own thread from which it dangled. It seemed deliberately to swing itself, and this movement, aided by a minute breeze, eventually brought it, as it played out more line, on to another stalk of bracken. It thus bridge a considerable precipice. I was wondering what its next step would be, but it seemed in no hurry at all to oblige, and I never discovered what that step was.

Hat-Raising Ceremony

Eventually, I got tired of waiting for the return of the crow and, uncoiling myself, and standing stiffly on my legs, and stretching, I ordered Don to have a good run upwards through the bracken. Uphill he galloped and then stopped, but, trying to give him as much exercise (as I always do), I bellowed to him to race on up to the top of the slope. And it was then that the crow left her nest. I caught sight of the movement out of the corner of my eye. For a second, or maybe more, I was "paralysed." Then I slipped forward the safety-catch and took a rather long and wild shot through the branches. It took no effect, however, except to speed her departure. Of this incident no more need be said, except that I deducted that her tail had been showing over the edge of the nest on the far side at which I had not bothered to look, and her beak, invisible, or all-but, had been turned toward my original line of approach. Why she had not seen my arrival I do not know. Maybe she was sitting low down on the nest and snoozing. My approach had been silent over the cushioned path of "bracken dust," worn flat by the passage of deer, foxes and badgers. Anyway, that's the story, and I tell it against myself. I raised my hat to that crow, but I rather fancy that the next time I take it off to her will be at her funeral.

This spring, I have shot several other crows, but the three I have mentioned seem to deserve special recording, as my experiences, apart from being lessons to myself, may also be lessons to those of my readers who also enjoy the useful sport of crow destruction. Every fresh experience, however small, should add to one's knowledge and craft, for the older we get the more we learn, and we do not stop learning until the day we turn up our toes.

* * *

On my way up to, and down from Birmingham, when I attended the Executive Committee Meeting of W.A.G.B.I., I could not help noticing, and commenting upon, the seemingly ever-increasing crows' nests to be seen in great numbers on either side of the railway track. Each year there appear to be more and more. Truly, the increase of the crow in this country is a greater menace to the welfare of game and wildfowl than any other, including the ubiquitous magpie, though perhaps excepting the fox. Farmers seem not to bother about the crows nesting on their ground, and many refuse permission to enter their land to those who would destroy crows. Why?

* * *

For weeks I have been watching a solitary adult rabbit, wondering whether it was a buck or a doe, and whether it would be the means of producing young. On the evening of Easter Bank Holiday its sex was made known to me. There, on a road not much used by traffic, it lay flattened, having been run over by a car. It was a doe in splendid health. Somehow, it reminded me of the man who was choked to death by the only bone in a filleted cod steak he was eating.

The end of a pipe at Fritton decoy.

A Shooting Paradise-XX

by J. Wentworth Day

FRITTON LAKE is unlike any other broad. Indeed, it is no broad at all in the true sense of the word, but a land-locked lake, the last relic of what was once a deep inlet of the sea, where, we may guess, Roman galleys sailed and triremes ploughed their way, when Christ was young in Galilee.

"We often get a bittern or two in the reeds," said Wally, quietly, "and we saw an eiderduck here in the hard winter of early 1947. Gadwall and garganey teal turn up every year and so does the goosander. They're rare ones for catching the fish! Of course, we get plenty of common duck like mallard and teal and tufted and shoveler. I sometimes catch tufted duck in the decoy pipes, but let 'em go.

"As for pintail, they turn up most seasons. If we catch any in the pipes, we send 'em to the London parks. I expect you've seen many a pintail duck on the Serpentine in Hyde Park or on the lake in St. James' Park that came from Fritton decoy. His Lordship catches duck here, mainly for natural history purposes—not to slaughter them for the market. There's one of the pipes. . . ."

The boat rounded a belt of reeds running out of a wooded promontory, sending silky ripples into the shaking reeds. A coot, his bald pate gleaning like a white shield, rose clumsily and scuttered across the lake, his long lobed feet dragging in the water. A hundred yards off-shore a pair of great crested grebes swam in lordly fashion, their white breasts gleaming, their chestnut ear-tufts rich in the sun.

The Decoy Pipe

In a little bay beyond the reed-bed showed the mouth of the decoy-pipe. A great hoop of iron rods, perhaps ten or twelve feet high and fifteen feet wide spanned a channel of water which curved away to the right, until its farther, narrower end was out of sight. Beyond the first iron hoop stretched a procession of others, each diminishing in size and covered with netting. This narrowing, netted tunnel of water is the business end of a decoy pond—the place where the duck are actually caught and killed.

Normally, a decoy pond is a sheet of a few acres of water only, usually from two to six acres in extent. Anything between three and eight netted pipes radiate from the corners and sides of such ponds, giving it the appearance from the air of a starfish. The reason for having more than one pipe is to enable the decoyman to "work the wind." Wild duck have a remarkably keen sense of smell and can smell a human being quite a long way off. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that the wind should be blowing from the pond towards whichever pipe is to be worked. Otherwise the duck smell the man and he might as well go home.

The Catch in the Trammel

At Fritton, since the lake is large, the pipes are placed at intervals at the head of suitable inlets leading into the woods. Each pipe is about thirty yards long, and narrows at the landward end to a water channel not more than two feet in width. This narrow end has a detachable funnel of hooped netting, named the trammel. Into this narrow detachable bag the duck are finally driven. The trammel is then unhooked and the decoyman, standing with the mouth of the bag-net or trammel between his legs, takes the ducks out one by one.

But how, the reader will ask, are the duck lured into the pipe? The answer is—the decoyman's dog. He is the most important person in the whole proceedings. Without the dog there would be no duck in the net. Wild duck do not like a dog. The reason for their dislike is that they hate foxes. The fox has an unpleasant habit of stealing up, flat as a shadow, on wild duck, when they are sunning or preening themselves on the banks of a pool or river, on which they love to sit and doze. Then with a spring, the fox lands slap in the middle of the unsuspecting, philosophic duck-party, snaps up one, and is away with him in a despairing farewell of quacks and flapping wings. This does not endear him to the duck tribe.

In a duck's eye a fox is a dog and a dog is a fox. Therefore wildfowl hate all dogs, especially reddish-brown dogs of fox-size. So, if a reddish-brown dog trots along the banks of the pool every duck within quack swims after him, shouting rude duck words at the top of his voice. So long as the duck is on the water he feels safe. He can really let his language rip.

So, three or four hundred years ago, if not more, an ingenious Dutchman hit on the idea of training a small, reddish-brown dog to run along a little path just inside the netted tunnel of a decoy pipe in full view of the duck. When the duck spotted the dog, and began to quack swear-words at him and swim after him, the dog promptly hopped over a little reed fence, a foot or so high, popped behind a man-high reed-screen placed at an oblique angle to the pipe, received a pat and a piece of cheese from his lurking master, popped out the other side of the tall screen, ran along the path in full view of the ducks—who having lost him momentarily, now paddled furiously after him with angry vituperation—hopped over another dog-jump and disappeared behind another tall screen.

This continued from the mouth to the end of the pipe, the duck swimming harder and quacking louder, each time the dog appeared and disappeared. When they had rounded the bend in the middle of the pipe however, the decoyman himself suddenly appeared behind them, waved his hat, and the terrified duck poured helter-skelter up the narrowing tunnel until they were huddled in the fatal trammel net at the far end.

Introduction in Reign of James I

This deadly method of duck-catching was introduced into England in the reign of James I, when the first decoy pond, derived from the Dutch word "Endekooy," was constructed by Sir William Woodhouse of Waxham Hall in East Norfolk on the Waxham Marshes. The remains of that old decoy pond can still faintly be seen in the surface of a grass cattle marsh about a quarter of a mile from Bridge House Farm, Waxham, on marshes on which I rented the shooting for a time. Although the bed of the old decoy pond is now no more than a shallow depression, holding water a few inches deep during the winter months, ducks still visit it regularly.

It is often claimed that the Winterton decoy on the Burnley Hall Estate, was the first to be constructed in England, but no one can say with certainty. I think its claim to priority is definitely put out of court by Lubbock, who, on page 138 of the MSS on which his "Fauna of Norfolk" was based, says of this decoy that the then squire of Burnley, Mr. Huntingdon, of Somerton, being about to form a decoy, out of a low, and over-flown part of his marshes, engaged an elderly man of the name of George Skelton from Friskney in Lincolnshire, and desired him to state the size which he preferred for his decoy. To everyone's amazement, from two acres to two acres and a half, was the space wished for. Workmen were put on, and the decoy in miniature, as it was compared to others, was soon completed. Other decoymen laughed when told of the petty puddle in which Mr. Skelton chose to exercise his skill, but laughter ceased and amazement began, when, in the second year of his superintendence, the said decoyman took eleven hundred teal in seven consecutive days.

"At that time I was often in the neighbourhood, allured thither by pursuit of objects in natural history, and the fowlers began to view a decoy in a totally different light to that in which they had hitherto regarded it. The marshman, a most intelligent man of his class, who always accompanied me, upon my remarking to him that wildfowl grew scarce, said:

"Surely, Sir, it is entirely the old gentleman at Somerton; they all go to his decoy and none come out. I had a flock of about sixty teal upon my broad three mornings last week, but I could not make a shot at them, and they always, when disturbed, took flight towards his decoy; at last they did not come back at all,

(Continued on following page)

Gun Gossip

by North Country

THIS week I am going to mention a few items from the report of the Council of The Gunmakers' Association for 1954/55 which, in my opinion, will be of interest to readers. As most of the latter will know, Mr. T. D. S. Purdy is president, and Mr. C. H. Pring chairman.

First of all as regards gun cleaning — that most important and necessary duty which we all owe to our guns of whatever type or grade — at the request of I.C.I. Limited, the Council have prepared a short article on the care of guns which will be incorporated in future copies of "The Shooter's Year Book." This seems to me to be an admirable idea, as so many guns are ruined (at least as far as second-hand value is concerned) just through neglect of this really quite simple job. Everyone who shoots therefore needs have no excuse in this matter in future. Next, as regards plastic cartridge cases (a subject upon which questions are often put to me), the Council have considered an approach by Maurice Chevalier, enquiring whether any cartridge manufacturer in this country would be interested in negotiating a manufacturing licence for cartridge cases made of plastic. The Council were of the opinion that although the plastic case was suitable it could not yet be made at a price which would enable it to compete with the present paper case.

Coming to the vexed question of purchase tax on shotgun cartridges and cartridges at reduced prices, the following opinion is expressed: "It seems fairly clear that if purchase tax is taken off cartridges the Minister will discontinue this scheme of issuing cartridges at reduced prices for pest destruction." And now on this matter of purchase tax I will quote extracts from a letter which has been addressed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer: "This Association is of the opinion that it is in the national interest that purchase tax should be removed as early as possible from shotgun cartridges and component parts. This opinion is based on the urgent need to encourage the destruction of vermin. This need has already been recognised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, who last season found it necessary to introduce a scheme to encourage the destruction of nominated vermin, principally wood-pigeon, by issuing cartridges at half price. Under this scheme, some 4½ million cartridges were issued at a cost in subsidy alone of about £30,000. In addition, the cost of distribution of these cartridges must have been considerable. The Ministry believe that as a result 1½ million wood-pigeon were destroyed, although it is considered by those experienced in shooting that this is an exaggerated figure.

"The magnitude of the task of vermin destruction can best be appreciated by considering, first, that from reports received the pigeon population does not appear so far to have been materially reduced, and second, that the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, in answer to a Parliamentary question, recently estimated that a wood-pigeon, in a year, ate between 10s. and £1 worth of food. This Association firmly believes that the most effective way to encourage the destruction of vermin is to reduce the cost of cartridges by the removal of purchase tax. The payment of subsidies, and there are several other schemes having limited application is considered undesirable, difficult and often expensive to administer, and known to be open to abuse.

"From the best information available, the annual consumption of shotgun cartridges varies between 50 and 60 million. Of these, informal experience indicates that 55 per cent to 60 per cent are used for the destruction of rabbits and other vermin, 10 per cent on wild-fowl and clay pigeons and 30 per cent to 35 per cent on the shooting of game. These facts alone support this Association's contention that shotgun ammunition should not be regarded primarily as 'sporting ammunition,' and as such should never have been included within the scope of Group 20. This Group is a comprehensive Group, covering 'Toys and Games (including coin or disc operated machines), and appliances, apparatus, accessories and requisites for sport, games, amusement, gymnastics or athletics (not being garments, footwear, road vehicles, bicycles, bicycle side-cars, bicycle and sidecar combinations or tricycles) including parts thereof and accessories thereto.' It is only when reference is made to the Notes to the Group in Notice No. 78, issued by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise, that because of an administrative decision shotguns and air guns, ammunition and accessories therefor of the kinds used for sporting purposes (including components of shotgun cartridges such as cases, smokeless powder, wads, lead shot and percussion caps); decoy birds and clay 'pigeons' are taxable. On the other hand, by a similar administrative decision 'rifles of all kind firing bullets (i.e. ball cartridges) as distinct from shot, are not taxable.'"

Well, all this goes to show what efforts are being made behind the scenes to provide cheaper cartridges for all.

☆

A Shooting Paradise

(Continued from previous page)

Sir. Well! I was over at Winterton the day before yesterday, and I saw him and asked him what success.

"'Nothing good lately,' said he, 'only a flock of about sixty teal came into the decoy last Thursday, and I took every one.'

"Ah! Sir, I was quite mistaken when I helped to make that decoy.

"I have conversed with this Skelton, and a more perfect master of his art cannot be imagined; the reason he gives for choosing so confined a pool, is that its small size renders the reed fences effectual barriers to all ordinary winds, so that fowl are not disturbed by ruffled waters, that being always near you they may be said to be always at command; and lastly, that the small size of the water renders it feasible to break and remove the ice when thin, during the hours of night when the wild-fowl are at feed, and so to keep the decoy working on some days when all others are closed."

Lubbock goes on to say of this Waxham decoy that "near the Winterton decoy was a much older one . . . one of the first established in Norfolk, possibly in England," and in this he is corroborated by Spelman, the antiquary, so I think we may take it that the Waxham decoy was probably the first to be constructed in England.

In about 1845, there were decoys besides those at Fritton, Ranworth, Winterton and Waxham, at Mautby near Yarmouth, Acle, Woodbastwick, Hemsby, Gunton, Cawston Woodrow, Wolterton, Hempstead, Langham, Holkham, Dersingham, Wormegay, Narford, Stow Bardolph, Hilgay, Northwold, Hockwold, Lakenheath (Suffolk), Besthorpe, and Flixton, near Lowestoft.

All these, with the exception of Fritton, are now disused.

Until recent years, the western end of Fritton Lake and much of the land surrounding it, belonged to the Herringfleet Hall Estate, which

Duck in a duck-trap on Fritton Lake.

was the property for many of the Leathes family. The late Lieutenant-Colonel Leathes was a fine old sportsman, a well-known Broadland yachtsman, and a keen shot. During the Leathes family ownership, a number of decoy pipes were worked at their end of the lake, whilst other pipes belonging to the Ashby decoy at the east end of the lake were the property of the Somerleyton Estate.

Since the death of Colonel Leathes, Herringfleet Hall property has been added to the Somerleyton Estate, so that, today, Lord Somerleyton owns almost the whole of the land surrounding the lake. This has been all to the good since it has ensured the preservation of the natural beauties of the lake, fishing and boating facilities on which are freely granted to the public during the summer season, and has prevented what would otherwise have been the inevitable "development" — and consequent desecration—of the land surrounding much of the lake by building speculators.

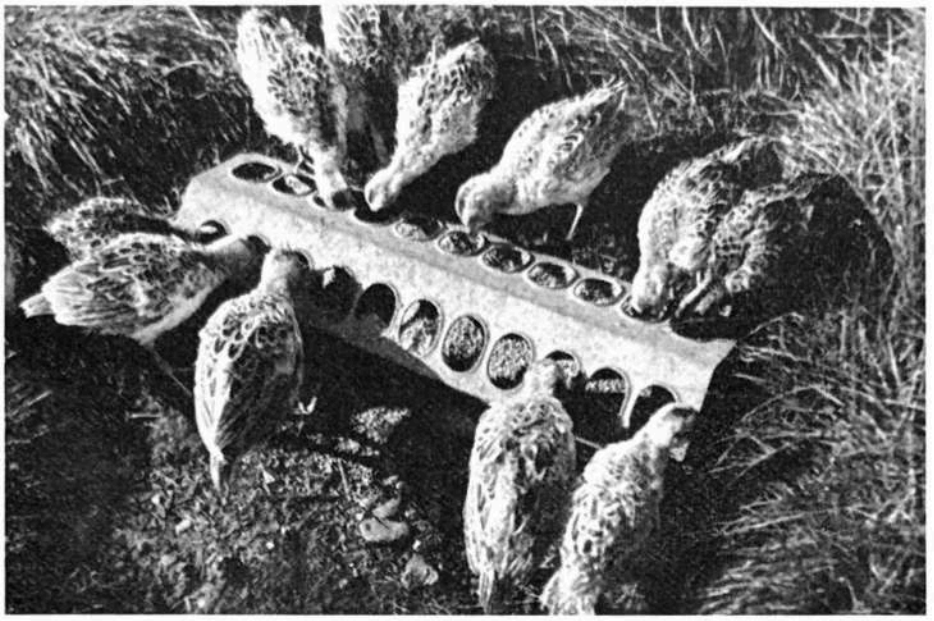
In Colonel Leathe's time, three pipes were worked at the Herringfleet end of the lake, and four at the Ashby end, whilst several other pipes were disused. There is little doubt that decoy pipes have existed on Fritton Lake for about 250 years, for as far back as 1879, Colonel Leathes stated to the late Thomas Southwell, then hon. sec. to the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, that the Herringfleet decoy "had been worked by his family for 160 years; the number of fowl taken was formerly very large, he has known 600 fowl taken in one day, and the average would sometimes reach 200 a day for weeks together, and this only at the Herringfleet end of the lake, whilst nearly equal takes were being made at the Ashby end."

(To be continued next week)

Death of Jim Corbett

Colonel Jim Corbett—who spent over half his life hunting down jungle man-eaters in India—has died at Nyeri, Kenya. Aged 80, he killed his first man-eating tiger in 1907.

In the last war he trained Allied troops for jungle fighting against the Japanese. Then, to raise money for men blinded in Burma warfare, he wrote a book —"Man-eaters of Kumaon." It became a world best-seller and was filmed.



Between three and four weeks old. Much too early to predict final results.

The Young Shot

Counting Chickens

by Petrel

THE man who coined the phrase about not counting your chickens before they are hatched was no mean counsellor and must have been a sportsman. It is my bet that he made his initial pronouncement on his return from a point-to-point. And it must have been a point-to-point like the one I attended on Easter Monday. As far as race meetings of any sort are concerned, I am a defeatist, first-class. To go with the intention of making money or even of covering expenses, is asking for trouble, and all this pessimism stems from the day when I went to a West Country point-to-point with the local parson and he, who should have been an eternal optimist said, "If I back a horse it's sure to drop dead," and he did and it did, right there in the paddock, before our very eyes, long before Mr. Askey ever thought of the catch line. I go to point-to-points for the same reason that I go to Cruft's and agricultural shows, to meet and talk to farmers, keepers and the locals, and the horses and dogs and cattle, the bookies, the tipsters, the side shows and the farming machines all form an interesting background to cultural, country conversation.

Amongst such company on one's home ground, one may glean many words of wisdom, so that when the next-door keeper, who on an earlier Saturday had successfully backed three rank outsiders at the hunt meeting and the winner of the National for good measure, voiced his opinion, I fastened on to it like a leech on the leg of an African bather.

Walking on Air

"Show me the horses, mister," he proclaimed, "an' I'll show you the winner. Ah; there; that one; looks like it's walking on air." Sure enough, the diagnosis worked and I applied it again. I found me a high stepper alright, but a myopic moron could have done the same.

The ladies' race. Six runners. Five "dogs" and a racehorse. Clutching my half dollar in eager, clammy hands I raced across and bulldozed my way through the holiday crowds, heedless of earlier parental warnings about pick-pockets. Honest Joe was sweating in the sunshine and hoarsely hollering "Evens." Fivers flashed and in the confusion my modest stake was accepted. "An even tenner," roared some unshaven Croesus and out came the duster and Guinness bottle and down went the price on the clean-scrubbed slate.

The race was like a mounted procession, with our jockey riding point. With a minimum of effort and superfluity of grace the favourite flew its fences and as it landed safely on the homeward side of the last one and galloped easily over the run-in, optimistic backers hurried away to collect amidst the usual shouts of "Skated it." "Home and dried." "They'll never catch him," and similar triumphant cries of the turf. An then, two yards from the post our fortune bearer dropped her manicured hands, patted her horse's neck, turned in the saddle to take a long view of her flagging pursuers . . . and fell off. She remounted in time to cross the line in third place and the crowd went mad, and most of them went home.

Damage by Game

I think, too, that our phrase-coiner must have been a gardener, who, like me, impatient and doubtful of the greenness of his fingers, inspected his plot morning and night for hopeful signs of seedling growth, even, in final desperation scratching beneath the surface to see that all was well. And I suspect that at least one row of his early peas suffered the same fate as mine not 24 hours after they had been planted.

Thanks to a regular feeding policy and a reduction of the wandering cat population we now have four resident hen pheasants and a cock amongst the shrubberies and great have been our efforts to preserve and sustain them in peace and quiet On the morning following my pea-planting a scattered line of disinterred seeds and a liberal sprinkling of pheasant droppings told their own story. What gratitude!

Had I been a large scale grower and had pheasants ruined my crop, I could, I suppose, like a certain Essex farmer, have protested against pheasant rearing in general and the damage caused by the birds. As the damage caused by pheasants is comparatively negligible, or because where they are reared in large numbers farming and game preservation go hand in hand, one tends to forget that it is possible for the tenant of an agricultural holding to claim compensation for damage by game, which includes besides pheasants, partridges, deer grouse and black game. I quote from Walmsley's "Rural Estate Management" on the subject:

"If the tenant of an agricultural holding suffers damage to crops exceeding one shilling per acre, by game (deer, pheasants, partridge, grouse and black game), he has a right to compensation under Section II of the Agricultural Holdings Act, 1923, amended by the Agricultural Act, 1947. Notice of the damage must be given before the expiration of one month after the tenant of the holding first became, or ought reasonably to have become, aware of the occurrence of the damage, and a reasonable opportunity must be given to the landlord to inspect—in the case of growing crops, before these are reaped, raised or consumed; and in the case of damage to a crop that has already been reaped or raised, before removal from the land is begun. Details of the claim must be served within one month after the end of the calendar year, or such other period of twelve months as may be agreed. Where the game rights are let to a third party, the landlord is entitled to be indemnified by the sporting tenant against any such claim as above for compensation for damage by game."

As far as my holding is concerned, the pheasants are welcome to what they can find, if only they will remain on the premises until I can reap a harvest at their expense. The birds which I grudge their ill-gotten gains are the thieving blackbirds.

Trials and Tribulations

There is no doubt at all in my mind that that ancient advisor was a shooting man. He must have been.

Of course, he tried to rear birds from scratch and found that there was a power cut during the night, and him with an electric incubator; or the broodies which he had combed the neighbouring farms to obtain, trampled the chicks, or refused to take to the day-olds, most of the brooding instincts having been bred out of the modern egg machine; or the foxes climbed the wire; or the winged vermin stole the eggs when his back was turned; or dog lovers who should have known better allowed their pets to stray and sitting birds deserted in consequence or . . . but there are so many things that can go wrong at this very delicate stage of rearing procedure.

And then, when everything had gone well, and he had a good showing of birds, the guns couldn't hit them; or a rarely visiting peregrine spoiled the drive; or a flanker went to sleep in the sun and failed to wave his flag at the very moment when all the coveys started to pour out across the boundary; or a wild dog which should never have been brought along, or at least should have been securely anchored, broke away in hot pursuit of a hare and carried every bird on the place before it.

And on the shore, I daresay, he spotted a great gathering of geese, and dreaming of a record bag made after them, only to find that due to lack of earlier reconnaissance he had forgotten the state of the tide and was unaware that a wide dyke separated him from his quarry, and like me I wager, many a time he lay flat on the estuary mud, filthy but con-

(Continued on page 273, col. 3)

Shooting The Rook

by L. R. James

THE rook is a paradox among birds. He has a raucous voice, yet in a chorus he provides one of the most delightful sounds of the countryside. He is a very wary bird, and difficult to shoot in any numbers, but will often site his rookery in the busiest of built-up areas. The rook undoubtedly eats many times his weight in harmful insects every year, and yet earns the execrations of farmers for the damage he does at seed time and harvest. The learned pundits now say that, on balance, the rook is beneficial to agriculture. Farmers, however, remain sceptical about the good deeds of the rook, and refuse to believe that he is really only looking for wireworms

A new angle on rook shooting.

in a newly-sown field of spring wheat! It is most unlikely that generations of farmers have erected scarecrows merely to entertain the birds! To make matters more awkward, a good pair of glasses will confirm that the average flock of rooks is, more often than not, half-composed of jackdaws!

The nesting habits of rooks make it relatively easy to count them in a rough and ready fashion, and it is usually agreed at a total of 1½ million. At times, arable farmers, state with some heat that there are too many rooks, but grassland farmers are more tolerant. Keepers and owners of walnut trees are unanimous that there are always too many rooks. In general, the countryman views the rook with a mixture of affection and anathema. He thinks that a good annual thinning keeps the rook in its place, but he would never agree to its extermination.

The May Rook Shoot

It has, therefore, long been the custom to take a modest toll of the young ones in May —the only time of the year when the birds are really vulnerable. For a hundred years and more, the May rook shoot has been a sporting fixture to which generations of shooters have looked forward every year. Many of us believe that old rural customs are based on acute observation and sound commonsense, and that for our present good—and for the future—we should continue to observe them. The hedgerows planted by our forefathers sheltered stock, produced timber, made nesting sites for game and other birds, and gave us the pattern of the English countryside. Our ancestors also kept the rook under control by shooting the young birds in May with a rifle. They well knew that in early spring the rook is feeding its nestlings on a purely insect diet, and at this time is performing its maximum benefit to agriculture and forestry.

They would have been instinctively against such modern practices as destroying the nests with high power fire-hoses or night-long firework displays to keep the birds from partly-hatched eggs. Organised raids on the eggs in early April have also been advocated, but these new-fangled practices defeat their own ends. When the breeding instincts of the rooks are frustrated by such means, they lay a second clutch and rear their brood in kinder weather in the secure shelter of full leaved trees. These late broods are hard to see and even more difficult to shoot.

In the golden days of shooting before the first war, our fathers considered the May rook shoot as one of the high spots of the sporting calendar. The birds cost nothing to rear, and the shoot was regarded as the best time to teach a boy the rudiments of handling a gun. The young rooks learning to fly gave targets easy enough for a beginner, and at this time of the year the boy's father could give all his attention to instruction and advice. Unlike today, only the flying birds were shot with a gun, and it was considered bad form to use anything but a rifle on sitters.

In the Days Before Restrictions

Fifty years ago there were virtually no restrictions on sporting rifles, and they could be bought from 16s. 6d. upward! As the name implies, Rook Rifles were specially made for the annual event in May, and in this limited sphere they compare very favourably with the modern .22 Rim Fire rifle which has now superceded them. They were all Centre Fire, and ranged in calibre from .25 to .44, but the most popular bores were the many variations of the nominal .300 such as .297/.300, .295/.300, and .310. The 80 grain bullet (twice the weight of the .22 L.R. of today) at a velocity of only 900 feet per second gave a high trajectory and poor accuracy at ranges over 50 yards. However, this heavy bullet with a muzzle energy of 190 foot pounds packed a considerable punch, and when it struck a rook a very dead bird was knocked off its perch. A young rook at 90 feet is a very high bird indeed (most of them are killed at half this height) and at limited ranges the old rook rifle was more than adequate, and even had advantages over the more accurate and deadly .22 Rim Fire of today. The old heavy bullet was usually brought to rest in the body of the rabbit or bird and killed partly by shock, whereas the light .22 generally passes clean through and wastes much of its potential energy.

At the turn of the century, new models of rifles were brought out every year, and they were given field trials on rooks with the famous shots of the day firing matches against each other. These contests were sponsored by the gun trade and the sporting Press and attracted nation-wide attention. The winner of one famous match over 200 birds was won by a score of 193 kills by a Lancaster Oval bore rifle. The loser had to give up at 120 as his weapon was too fouled by black powder to shoot any more! The old Rook Rifle is now entirely outmoded by the cheaper and more efficient .22 Rim Fire, but the cartridges are still available for those who like to use "vintage" weapons.

The most suitable modern cartridge for rook shooting is the .22 Short (if the rifle will take any length case), and I prefer the Hollow Nosed pattern. The Short cartridge is cheaper than the standard Long Rifle, gives a clean kill at short ranges, and is much less dangerous. A young rook at an average height is a fair sized target and there is no need for fine telescopic or orthoptic sights; in fact the old open sight will give better visibility on birds partly hidden by leaves. The iron sight may perhaps enable the user to attempt some gallery shots on flying birds and so impose a great strain on his shooting reputation.

Low Nests and High Nests

Rook shoots vary a great deal in the quality of the sport. Birds in low park oaks give targets that the veriest beginner can knock down with his eyes shut, but a young rook on thin branches on high elms on a windy day can puzzle the finest of shots. Rooks often build in trees 90 or more feet high, and when they do they make a target equal in difficulty and fascination to the overhead pheasant 30 yards up. The body of a young rook is only about a quarter the size of a pheasant, and when it is swaying at the top of a tall tree it is a very small mark for a rifle bullet. Sometimes they can be hit in a momentary calm, but it is better to swing with the bird and give them a lead in the manner of a shot gun.

To make things even more difficult, the old-time experts reckoned that the cream of rook shooting was provided by the more forward birds in their first essays at flight. For this sort of shooting they blackened their foresights and gave a lead of about two feet on a bird 60 feet or so high. There is a lot of empty space round a young rook fluttering overhead, and readers are advised to take plenty of ammunition and be prepared for a powerful "crick in the neck" if they propose to use a .22 on flyers! The humane shooter will not take advantage of any opportunity offered by the adult birds, and it is also considered bad form to shoot the young birds while they are on the nests, as they invariably scramble inside if they happen to be wounded.

It is unfortunate that the onerous restrictions of the police on sporting rifles, and the offer of half-price 12-bore cartridges by the N.F.U. and the Ministry of Agriculture have resulted in

A little support for the author.

making the average rook shoot today into a dull form of vermin destruction. Many rookeries are unshot nowadays, and it is not difficult for a man with a rifle to obtain permission to thin them out in the time-honoured fashion. The shot gun owner who is invited to a rook shoot is advised to stand himself well away from the rookery and shoot those forward birds that have already started to fly, and to leave the sitters to those who take pleasure in such easy targets.

Rook meat is not a dish for the epicure (in

(Continued on page 274, col. 3)

Billy tidies up after tree-felling operations.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

ON many estates one may find an old age pensioner who is allowed to do odd jobs at his own speed in any of the outdoor departments. A person of this kind is usually a semi-retired forester or gardener who has spent most of his active life on the same estate; and those pottering jobs of his later years are undertaken more to offset boredom than anything else, although the little extra remuneration is, of course, not insignificant to a man with only the State pension as a regular income.

I must add, however, that many lairds and squires do grant an old retainer a private pension and a rent-free cottage when he finally retires, even in this difficult age for landowners. But a mutual contributory scheme has now been evolved which will replace in the future this charitable obligation. Payments begin while the worker is still in his prime; and in the scheme known to me (sponsored by the Country Landowners) he draws a pension for life from the age of 65. Farm workers are also eligible for this benefit.

The estate pensioner whom I know best today is Billy. He is a young-looking 68, and his Peter Pan appearance is probably due to a lifelong love of singing for Billy is still a good tenor. In his more vigorous years, as estate waggoner, he often made the woodlands ring with his spirited rendering of "Westhead" and other hunting ditties of the Lake District. Occasionally he has broadcast "John Peel" in company with the local Mountain Singers.

Coop Moving Operations

It was he who transported our reared pheasants to covert and assisted the keepers in every way when horses were needed. Sometimes he had to take those pheasant poults to awkward places, but there never was a disaster, nor anything remotely resembling one; for Billy knew how to humour his animals when a steep fellside gradient made them panicky. Only a very odd casualty resulted from those bumpy journeys, although his waggon generally carried more than a normal load of coops. In addition to the two rows placed back to back on the floor of the waggon, we had a wooden tray roped along the trough of the roofs, which took an extra four of five coops. Anyone who has knowledge of this method of loading bottomless coops will be fully aware that the upper tray has only to slip sideways a few inches and one of the lower rows will be tilted, which might have disastrous consequences for the young birds. To avoid any possibility of trouble, some keepers shift their pheasants in coops with wooden bottoms, but we invariably used sacking.

Chance decreed that Billy should reach retiring age just when his customary work was finished. He could never have mastered the intricacies of a tractor after having devoted over 50 years to the management of horseflesh; so he cleans out ditches, trims back bushes, tidies up after the foresters have felled a tree, and sweeps up leaves. He has even done a little keepering work, when rabbits must be removed from a potential plantation.

Voices of the Heronry

The other spring morning Billy was cleaning out a ditch in our main covert near a grove of ancient silver firs and beeches, which stand among rhododendrons and azaleas that will be ablaze with colour at Whitsuntide. Suddenly a Voice broke in on his happy musings. "Eh?" said Billy in reply; but getting no answer, he devoted himself once more to his spadework. A minute later he heard the Voice again, although no one was visible on the nearby pathway. Billy decided then that someone was having a game with him; so he bellowed: "Hello! whaddya want?" Immediately a fearful cacophony of shrieks, groans, yaps, grunts and wheezes came from the heronry in the tops of those massive trees, which Billy had forgotten about. I came up the woodland path a little later, and the fearful racket was still in full swing.

This heronry has been in existence for about 12 years only. It came into being when another heronry was put out of commission by timber felling operations in a National Trust property in this district. No one seemed to notice at first that the evicted herons had favoured us until they began their noisy spring broadcast. But even this discordant announcement, unmistakeable to the trained ear, was not interpreted correctly by estate people who lived in the neighbourhood. Our late joiner heard a yapping sound one Saturday at intervals, and he sent his daughter hotfoot to tell me that a dog was caught in a trap. I was completely dumbfounded by this news, because I had no traps set anywhere just then. However, I went off to investigate this mystery, and found the heronry in its initial stages.

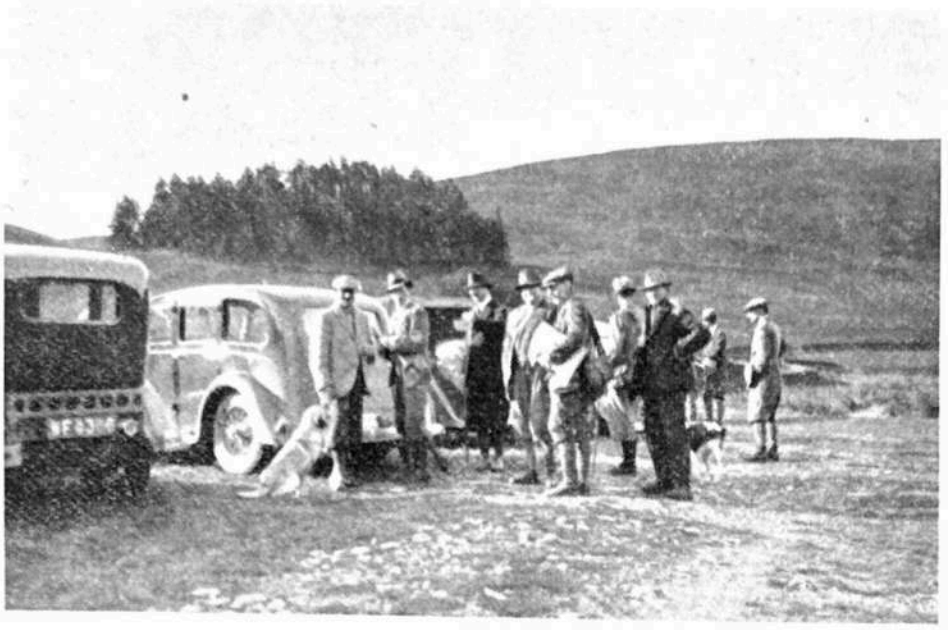
One is apt to wonder how many stories of ghosts, warlocks, kelpies, witches, banshees, and other allegedly supernatural beings owe their currency to blood-curdling sounds of the wild similar to the nuptial notes of the heron. A few nights after Billy had been taken in by a series of low-pitched grunts I was slightly startled to hear something that resembled a moan in the same area. If I had been superstitious, I could easily have believed that I was hearing a spirit in distress among the gloomy bushes under the silver firs; for a misty moon increased the eerie atmosphere.

Screech or the Vixen

Another awe-inspiring sound of the wild at night is the voice of a vixen searching for her mate. This is probably the most banshee shriek that comes from a British animal or bird, with the possible exception of a hedgehog in pain or in a state of fear. There are slight differences in the scream of vixens, but the best (if that term is admissible) can be truly terrifying, particularly in a black, stormy night. Occasionally I have been out on such a night in the "wee sma' hours ayont the twal" protecting my pheasants from marauders human and vulpine, when the sudden scream of a vixen near at hand has made me start involuntarily, although I am quite used to this infernal racket. What the reaction of a townsman would be on hearing this nocturnal voice for the first time we can only guess; but we can be sure that it originated many ghost stories in remoter times, when people were apparently more superstitious than they are nowadays.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that all countryfolk are well acquainted with those startling noises of the wild, or even with the voices of common creatures that inhabit their own locality. People who ought to know something of this subject often surprise me with their profound ignorance. The monotonous keening of young buzzards after they have left the nest; the he-he-he of sparrow-hawks in the springtime; the nuptial notes of jays and magpies; yes, even the echoing call of the yaffle, all defeat many countryfolk here, probably because they have never been particularly interested in those sounds. Which proves that the habit of listening has to be cultivated definitely. But it does happen occasionally that an intelligent countryman fails to hear something only by amazing bad luck. The most remarkable instance of this was given to me by a man who was whipper-in to a fell pack for many years in an honorary capacity, and who had therefore lodged often in remote Lakeland dales, yet he confessed that he had never heard a fox bark at night. His hearing was as good as anyone's, so this must be unique.

The habit of exact observation has also to be cultivated definitely, which is hard work; and for that reason we can hardly accept the uncorroborated evidence of even the average country-man when he offers us some unusual item of natural history. Nor can we be sure that he has given us correct data for our own deductions. During the heaviest snowfall of last winter a dalesman here saw a strange flock of birds settle in a meadow near his home. He tried to describe them to me verbally, then he tried to sketch one with a pencil. Finally, I said that they must have been lapwings, although those birds only arrive here in scattered pairs to breed about the end of March. But the evidence was so inconclusive that I do not really know what they were.



Out-of-the-way moors made accessible by modern cars.

A Short History of Grouse Shooting

by Henry Fletcher

IT would be a mistake to suppose that the development of the twin sports of grouse shooting and partridge shooting took place simultaneously; or that they were equally responsible for a technique which was gradually evolved, and has much that is common to both. Partridge shooting is much the older sport of the two. It was practised in and before the days of Beau Brummel in the eighteenth century. On the other hand, up to about the year 1850 grouse were of so little importance that no close season had ever been fixed when it would have been illegal to shoot them.

This fact is given by Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald in his "British Game." He also states that Joseph Lang produced his breechloader in 1853, and that this date could really be taken as the beginning of grouse shooting. The invention of the breechloading gun is the first of a number of events which mark the history of grouse shooting, like milestones on the road of time. Developments then followed so quickly one after another, that within the next thirty or forty years it had reached its full stature, and was, in almost all respects, the sport as it exists today.

The construction of the railways which took place about this time made the moors accessible in a way never previously known. This accessibility and the invention of the new gun initiated a poplarity for grouse shooting which steadily increased as the years went by.

Sport Over Dogs

It would be a truism to say that in the early days dogs were indispensable for every kind of shooting. They found the game and their owners shot it. In so far then as there was any grouse shooting before 1853 this was the method employed. But a new technique for finding the birds soon followed.

Formerly guns had gone out singly or in pairs depending on their dogs, mainly setters and pointers, for sport. Instead of this, a large party of guns went out with attendants and walked over the ground in line, trusting to be able to get near enough to the grouse, so that when they rose, they were within shot. This method of "walking up," and also that of shooting over dogs, is still practised where grouse are scarce, or the terrain to be shot over presents special difficulties.

It should not be imagined that because Joseph Lang brought out his breechloader in 1853 everyone discarded his muzzle-loader, and at once equipped himself with this improved weapon. On the contrary, it would be much nearer the truth to say that the muzzle-loaders were replaced very gradually, and certainly at the outset they were the more generally employed of the two.

If the invention of the breechloader is one of the important events in the history of grouse shooting, the next was even more outstandingly so. This was the introduction of driving. In the Badminton Library on Shooting, Lord Walsingham says the idea of driving partridges was first put into practice, in about 1845, by Lord Huntingfield on his estate at Heveningham in Suffolk. There is an earlier instance when it was used by Mr. William Coke in 1823, in his two day match against Lord Kennedy, when he succeeded in killing over 80 brace each day, but this was an exceptional use, and not one which was forthwith adopted for ordinary occasions.

Rooted Objection to Change

No doubt within a few years of 1845 this method of handling partridges had become widespread, and it would not be at all surprising if this led to its being tried on the moors. Probably it was tried out quite independently by a number of owners of moorland in Yorkshire and the north of England, where it first became the established practice. This would be about 1860. It is noteworthy that at the outset there were no butts, or "batteries" as these shelters were called originally, but the guns concealed themselves, as best they could, in a hollow, or behind a rock or any other natural feature they could find to hide them.

Driving was not adopted in Scotland until about 1870. This has been attributed to the obstinacy of Scots keepers and their rooted objection to change: also to the presumed unsuitability of many of the moors for driving; and again to the difficulty of getting sufficient beaters in the more sparsely inhabited districts.

The years 1870 and 1871 were good grouse years, and these were followed by a bumper year in 1872. The result was that bags of unprecedented size were made on many moors, both in England and in Scotland, and from that time onward driving was regarded as the method *par excellence* for killing grouse. It followed as the result of the ease with which patrons could take part in the sport, and the extraordinary number of grouse that could be killed, that grouse shooting became immensely popular, and most of the leading men in society took part in it, and attained a high degree of skill. And indeed, the superlative shots, like the Marquis of Ripon and Lord Walsingham, were so much venerated, that when reference is made to them even now, they

Jeeps and Land Rovers bring the guns right to the butts.

are generally described as the "giants" of those days.

Instances may be given of the bags of grouse which were made during this period. On High Force Moor during nineteen shooting days in 1872 eight guns killed 15,484 grouse. Lord Walsingham has given an account of the two records he made for a single gun; the first on August 28th, 1872, on Blubberhouses, when he shot 842, and the second on August 30th, 1888, when he killed 1,070 on the same moor and under similar conditions. It may be noted that on the first occasion about twelve hours elapsed between his first shot and his last, and about fourteen hours on the second. He used four guns with loaders; two of the guns at his earlier attempt were muzzle-loaders, and the only powder available at that time was black powder, which makes these figures all the more remarkable.

An even more astonishing record for an individual performance has been ascribed to Sir Frederick Millbank, who, shooting in company with a team of guns, killed 728 grouse in one day in 1872. Having regard to the fact that presumably the day was of normal length, and that he would take his turn with the other guns in occupying the best butts, this achievement seems to surpass altogether that of Lord Walsingham, who had everything arranged for his personal advantage.

The record bag for a single day for all time was established considerably later, when on August 12th, 1915, eight guns killed 2,929 grouse on the Littledale and Abbeystead moors in Lancashire. It may be added that the record for a single day's shooting on Broomhead in Yorkshire, a much smaller moor, is within a hundred of this enormous bag.

But there was to be a rapid decline from the heights that had been reached by 1872. Twenty years earlier the main use of the moors had been for rearing sheep. Shepherds were in control of the moors, and they burnt large sections of heather regularly, because it was on the young growth that the sheep fed. When it was realised that it was more profitable to utilise the moors for producing grouse in large quantities, everything which militated against their production was eliminated as far as possible, including sheep and all kinds of vermin which preyed upon the grouse. And, because, illogically no doubt, it was thought that the more heather there was, the more grouse there would be, the customary burning of the heather was curtailed or brought to an end; for the promoters of this policy failed to grasp that the grouse, no less than the sheep, fed upon the young heather.

Outbreak of Strongylosis

The lessening of the food supply combined with the overcrowded state of the moors in 1872, brought an outbreak of the disease known as strongylosis. This particularly affects the grouse, and from time to time there have been virulent outbreaks of this disease, which has so decimated many moors, that it has taken five or seven years for them to regain a normal stock. It was only about forty years later that the cause of the disease was fully understood, and the knowledge of the life history of the worm, which caused it, was at the disposal of the owners who were to suffer so severely from the more or less periodic infestations of this parasite.

Some thirty years of varying fortune followed the first outbreak of grouse disease. During this time the moors had their ups and downs; sometimes there would be as plentiful a supply of grouse as there had ever been, and sometimes this disease would sweep the moors and reduce the stock to almost nothing. Then there would be a recovery, followed by another outbreak, and so it continued.

At length a number of owners of grouse moors appealed to the Government for help, and this resulted in a special committee being appointed by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries in 1905 to inquire into all the circumstances which affected these birds. Lord Lovat, himself the owner of 180,000 acres of land, was the chairman of this committee. They went most thoroughly into every aspect of the life of the grouse, how they bred, what they ate, and most particularly into the life history of the worm which was causing such devastation. The thoroughness with which the committee entered into every detail can best be exemplified by the fact that their investigations lasted so long, that their report was not published until 1911.

Lunching in the shelter of a brow during an August day.

This report appeared in two volumes under the title "The Grouse in Health and in Disease," and might perhaps be called the Magna Charta of the red grouse, or lagopus scoticus, to give its scientific name. It is certainly one of the principal landmarks in the history of grouse shooting, and it has enabled landowners to manage their moors on a rational basis, instead of being, as they had previously been, the victims of chance and abstruse causes.

The report makes it clear that grouse disease is due to an infestation of the strongyle worm, and it puts on record the life cycle of this, the greatest enemy of the grouse. It explains how at one time in their development the worms climb to the top of the heather shoots in wet or damp weather, and are then swallowed by the grouse as they feed. The worms remain in the intestinal tract until they reach maturity and lay their eggs. The eggs are evacuated, and in due course hatch out into a new generation of strongyle worms; these may again be taken by a grouse, and so the cycle continues. Under some conditions the cycle can be very brief, within a fortnight, and when they are harboured in excess by their hosts, they quickly impair their vitality. The birds may become progressively weaker and then die.

A Cause of Death

It is thought that grouse always carry with them a limited number of these worms in the intestinal tract, but so long as the birds are well fed and remain in good condition, there is no increase in the number of the worms they harbour; but as the food supply deteriorates, so do the worms increase, and keep on increasing as their host weakens, until eventually the bird dies. It follows that as more birds become affected, the output of these eggs keeps rising, with an ever-increasing fouling of the land, and of the heather on which the grouse feed, until an epidemic is reached, and the bulk of the birds in that locality perish. It is only when these nematode worms die off from lack of hosts, that the few grouse remaining can gradually repopulate the moor and the balance of nature be restored.

Interesting Figures

The report is profusely illustrated in black and white and also with coloured plates. Amongst much information it gives an estimate of the annual value of the rents received and the number of grouse killed north and south of the Border. The figures are for Scotland £1,000,000 in rentals and 900,000 brace killed. For England and Wales the figures are £270,000 in rentals and 320,000 brace killed.

An interesting feature in the Appendix is an outline map of Scotland for each year from 1872 to 1909, and those moors which suffered from disease during any particular year are indicated by a black dot on the map concerned. Some years there are hardly any dots, and in other years these appear in large clusters, and show to a considerable extent that these outbreaks come in cycles, and that they seem to affect the country as a whole, and not that smaller areas are affected independently. The worst years were 1873, 1889, 1891, 1907 and 1908. The report may indeed be described as a *magnum opus*, both figuratively, and also literally, as the two volumes weigh 7lb.

There are many things which an owner can do to promote the welfare of the grouse on his moor. These are to keep predatory birds and animals under control, to burn moderate areas of heather regularly in rotation, in order to provide the maximum amount of food, and to drain wet ground. Additional precautions are to keep bracken in check, to put down food if the moor is heavily covered with snow, and to supply grit if local sources may be insufficient. But all these are subordinate to the maxim that the stock of grouse must never be allowed to exceed the number for which the food supply will be adequate during the scarcest time of the year. To do so is to run a very real risk of an epidemic of grouse disease, the ultimate consequence of which may be to put the moor out of commission, so far as shooting is concerned, for years.

The first world war followed shortly after the publication of "The Grouse in Health and in Disease," and during that strenuous time, as during the second world war, it was not the lack of knowledge, so much as of man-power, which prevented all the foregoing precepts being carried out, and many moors suffered seriously in consequence.

As for the necessity of keeping the number of grouse within the food capacity of the ground they occupy, it should be stressed that this can be done where driving is practicable. It is common knowledge that grouse become harder to approach as the season advances,

(Continued on page 272, col. 2)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor welcomes letters, and photographs relating to them, for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published.

ROE DEER QUERY

Sir,—I was interested in Gabriele Nardinocchi's letter requesting information about roe deer in your issue for April 15.

We know little or nothing about the sporting value of roe in this country. In 99 cases out of a 100 roe here are killed with small shot, or snared.

I suggest that your Italian correspondent refers his queries to the Austrians, Germans, Belgians, or Dutchmen. The recently-formed Roe Club of Holland will give him all the information he requires. He can get the address of this organisation from: Major H. A. Fooks, The Oast, Down Lane, Frant, Sussex. Major Fooks is one of the few men in this country who knows how to stalk a roe properly with a rifle.

HENRY TEGNER,
Whalton, Northumberland.

SHOCK FOR A SPARROW-HAWK

Sir,—While pigeon shooting, I put two home-made decoys up a tree and next moment a sparrow-hawk struck one of them, and the next instant was on the ground looking very sick indeed. Needless to say, that was as far as he got.

How I enjoy reading *The Shooting Times;* it does help to pass the time until the shooting season starts again.

CHARLES BELL,
Harrogate.

AN APRIL COVEY

Sir,—Perhaps the following may be of some interest to a great many of your readers. While out after pigeon on Good Friday morning here on a farm in Gloustershire, during my wander round I came upon the usual grand sights one expects to see at this time of year—three couple of paired-up mallard preening on the moat; his lordship, a fine cock pheasant and two wives with him; seven hares playing about in different fields; four pairs of partirdges.

But now, Sir, for a sight that I have never seen in my 58 years' span. On April 11, while walking through longish clover, I flushed a strong, flying covey of 14 partridges. Had it been September instead of April, I think I could have managed to grass a right and left. Has any reader, I wonder, seen such an unusual sight? I am most interested to know.

All good wishes and power to *The Shooting Times.*

WILDFOWLER,
Gloucester.

[Our correspondent is a well-known Gloucestershire shooting man. For once, we are at a loss for an explanation, except to say that early spring broods of partridges have been quoted by "experts" as a possibility, though an improbability.—Ed.]

INBREEDING OF PARTRIDGES: FOOD OF FOXES

Sir,—I was disappointed in Mr. Verschoyle's reasons for assuming inbreeding to be the cause of the trouble he mentioned in his last letter. I was hoping we were going to learn something which even I.C.I., with their excellent marking system, had missed. He now "assures" me that partridges do, in fact, interbreed in the covey. Or rather he tries to. His remarks quite fail to impress me.

When so-called coveys pair later than others it is a good indication that they are not true coveys at all, but a company of elderly birds which in the previous year failed to rear a brood, and in which the breeding instinct does not rise so quickly. Strangely enough, with no system of marking, it beats me how one can be so certain, as Mr. Verschoyle appears to be, that these birds were closely related. Most certainly barren birds and weakly chicks in unshot areas are no proof of inbreeding, or that shooting is necessary to combat it.

The former may be seen in plenty in those places where too many birds are shot and too little vermin killed; in fact they are more plentiful there than anywhere, and shooting never entered into nature's scheme of things at all. Sooner or later the fact will have to be faced in this country that we cannot continue to look everywhere but the right place for our own partridge troubles, and Mr. Verschoyle's theories cannot (as I had hoped) help in this direction.

Regarding the article, "The Food of Foxes," by "Tower-Bird." Honest, forthright, knowledgeable countrymen could not agree more with what he writes therein. If field sports are to remain healthy, all sections must stand together, but one would imagine by the way our intelligence is insulted concerning foxes and their food, hunting people wished us to be their worst enemies. It is not so long ago, we were told, that foxes were necessary to keep rabbits in check; now, apparently, snails are their main diet! I shiver to think of the effect such petty propaganda will have on the future of true sports. The boomerang of this weak propaganda, issued a few years ago, when we all stood by a friend in trouble, is already at work, and I only hope the real enemies of sport do not take advantage of the fact.

WARM-BARRELS,
Northants.

The President presenting Dr. G. W. Storey and Mr. E. L. Parish with inscribed spirit flasks at the annual dinner of The Frodsham and District Wildfowlers' Club. (See report on the dinner on page 274 of this issue.)

FOX HUNT!

Sir,—Myxomatosis has been with us for a few months, and the result can be seen in the enclosed cutting, taken from today's (April 12) *Dundee Courier and Advertiser.*

ANGUS (Gamekeeper).

[Thank you for the cutting reproduced below.—Ed.]

FOX HUNT,
TOMORROW (Wednesday)
Owing to severe losses in Lambs by Foxes, a Hunt in the
Newtyle-Glamis Area
will be held Tomorrow.
All Experienced Guns are Requested to Attend.
£5 will be paid to anyone Killing a Fox, and £5 for anyone Discovering an Inhabited Earth.
RENDEZVOUS at HATTON at 9.30 a.m.
Bring Own Lunch.
Transport to the Hills will be Provided.
JAMES FINDLAY

A HAND-REARED LEVERET

Sir,—I am a regular reader of your most excellent journal which I have been taking in for three years. I look forward to it each week. I hope that you will carry on with the good work you are doing.

I would like to tell you about the young hare which my mother has reared with a bottle. It all started when my father was taking his usual walk on the afternoon of February 26, when there was frost and snow deep on the ground. The little terrier dog which was with him chased a hare across two or three fields, but eventually gave it up as a bad job.

My father went on walking on his way to a lime quarry. When he got to the petrol pump, he noticed spots of blood in the snow, and followed the marks to a little hole in the middle of the road. To his surprise, he found two baby hares, one frozen stiff; the other, now christened Betty, was just alive. He took the little hare home, with the intention of bringing it back in the evening, thinking that its mother would search for it.

My mother first put some milk on its lips with a feather, then fed it with a spoon, but now a bottle and teat are used—the bottle (an aspirin bottle) and the teat the inside of a fountain pen over a thick cork with a hole in it. Mother gets up at 3.0 a.m. every morning to feed her pet, but by now it nibbles on its own.

The hare is very playful. She has the run of the house. We give her an hour or so on the green every day. She eats until she is quite full, and then she wants to get back into the house. We shall be giving her freedom when the fine weather comes.

I would like to know the average weight of a badger (fully grown). My father shot one a few years back weighing 49½lb.

Could you tell me, also, if pigeon can be shot all the year round, and what number is the best size shot for them?

D. A. GRIFFITHS,
Crwbin, S. Wales.

[There is no close season for pigeon. We suggest you use No. 5 or 6 shot.—Ed.]

WOODCOCK AND SOME STORIES

Sir,—I am very keen about woodcock and quite a lot are handled by me during the year and I have half-a-dozen books on the subject. I saw in one of your early March issues (copy lent so I cannot refer to it) that you say there is only *one* species of woodcock. In that case, what are these *large* light coloured birds that arrive first mid-October? All the woodcock first shot were this kind. And what are these *small,* dark-coloured birds shot in mid-November and on to the end of the season? I saw twelve woodcock shot in December and *all* were these small, dark-coloured birds. There was not a large, light-coloured bird amongst them. Also, I saw many fewer large, light birds shot than small, dark birds. My books say the large bird is generally thought to be the female—and "Fur and Feather" series talk of three kinds of woodcock—the common 'cock, the large muffled 'cock, and the little black or dark 'cock. I imagine the large, light-colour was the common 'cock, and the small dark kind the little black or dark 'cock which I handled.

A woodcock was shot here out of season flying with a flock of wood-pigeon. It was beautifully marked with blue down the back.

The following stories may interest readers. We had just shot a tigress on a very hot day in March, and being midday we decided to rest by a dry river-bed. Noticing a lot of

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GEOFFREY BLES, 52 DOUGHTY STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

holes in the bank behind which the guns were sitting, I moved out in the dry river-bed and warned the others of snakes. Forgetting my warning, I had come back to join them to hear some stories being told and dosed off to sleep. We were all wearing shorts. Suddenly I felt something moving up my shorts and opened my eyes to see one of the guns on all fours pushing a piece of grass up my shorts. I cursed him and told him to clear out.

After a brief interval, I felt what I thought was the straw being pushed up my shorts again. I took no notice until it got higher than I liked, when I opened my eyes to see two inches of a snake's tail protruding from the end of my shorts. Very cautiously I raised myself and dexterously caught the tail between finger and thumb, whisked the snake out and jumped on it. It proved to be a most dangerous snake—green in colour, arrow shaped head, about 2½ft. long. The practical joke might have ended sadly.

To end the evening, we were telling stories, one about putting ice on top of a mosquito net of men sleeping out in the garden on a dark night, and they yelling for their servants to take their beds under cover of the verandah before the storm started! Well, it was a terribly hot night especially in our tents, so our adjutant, who loved his beer, and found he couldn't sleep inside his tent, had his bed moved out of his tent under the trees close by.

Drip! Drip! Drip! but all he said was "Damn N—— and his ice!" and continued to sleep. He woke up in the morning to find that, by mistake, his servants in the dark had put his bed under a tree, where some 20-30 vultures, which had just devoured the inside of the skinned tigress we had shot earlier, were roosting!

J. A. C. MUNNS,
Folkestone, Kent.

[While there is only one *species* of woodcock, there may be many "kinds," if you take into consideration variety in size and plumage. No doubt the considerable variation in plumage is due to the particular part of the world migrating woodcock come from.—Ed.]

THE RINGING OF GEESE

Sir,—I read Peter Scott's spirited reply to my article with certain dismay, and do hope that acrimony will not creep into the correspondence, as this would be a pity. It all started because I found myself unable to accept without reserve the conclusions of The Wildfowl Trust drawn from a set of problematical figures. It seems to me that The Trust is in danger of becoming a monopoly in the ornithological world, and any monopoly is a bad thing. By this I do *not* mean that I consider The Trust a bad thing—far from it. I have the utmost admiration for their work, as has everyone directly interested in wildfowl, and many who are not.

However, there is an ever-present feeling amongst wildfowlers that The Trust holds the destiny of their sport in its hands. Every now and then sanctuaries spring up overnight, and in the Wild Bird Protection Act birds became protected, in my opinion, mainly on the result of the Trust's scientific researches, which are based on figures which are, of necessity, arrived at by a great number of probabilities, in lieu of an impossible physical count. All would be well if these results tallied with the actual number of wildfowl to be seen round our shores, but they do not.

Mr. Scott should not despise my own local experiments on Solway. Of course, the results are based on the recovery of birds in only one place, but it is a very large place, and they took place over a very long period. They are not based on a few isolated weeks taken at random. Mr. Scott knows very well what is meant by the "law of averages." He has used it himself in arriving at many of his conclusions, and short of a physical count, I appreciate that there is no way of calculating such totals as world population, goose nests and the like.

I say in my article: "It will probably be argued that the figures at which I have arrived are not altogether conclusive—a view that I am in some measure prepared to subscribe." This is a complete understatement, and was intended to be read as such. I never claimed that they proved anything, and could shoot as many holes in them as there are in a colander. For instance, one reasonably logical conclusion to be drawn from the fact that as only one of the 426 locally ringed geese came to table, netting and ringing drive geese away from the district. This is not the case. Three hours after netting geese in a field last October I, myself, saw about 2,000 of them peacefully feeding in the very same field! So it *can* be sometimes dangerous to draw conclusions from statistics.

My "views of the movements and status of the barnacle" are necessarily "parochial," as my observations were, as stated, confined to Solway.

But that they are inaccurate I emphatically deny. I am out on the marshes daily, and thus in a better position to judge than those who make only periodical visits.

Finally, The Wildfowl Trust "seek the truth." We all do that. It is because the Trust's "truth" does not appear to coincide with the evidence of my eyes, and their method of arriving at it does not satisfy my mind, that I venture to criticise. If the whole question was merely a subject for discussion in the clubs and pubs, all would be well. But the powers of The Trust are becoming so far-reaching.

BILL POWELL,
Glencaple, Dumfries.

[We invite Mr. Scott to reply, after which this particular correspondence is closed.—Ed.]

The largest salmon caught on the Wye since 1926. It was taken on April 4, 1955, and weighed 44lb.; length, 50in.; girth, 24in. The rod used was a 7 ft. 7oz. fibre glass one, with a line of 14lb. breaking strain. Reel, a Pfleugger; lure, a Heddon "River Runt" spinner.

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On the Game Farm

by Joyce Eltringham

DURING the last week or two (I am writing this at the end of March), much has been happening on the game farm, as indeed it will have been on all game farms. On account of the weather, we were late in penning the pheasants for laying, but as soon as the snow had finally melted we got on with the job and the birds have now settled down in their summer quarters. The winter pens, in which so recently pheasants were running (and snow lying) are now devoid of both, and await the attention of a local farmer who will shortly harrow, roll, and lime them, and, later on, take the hay from them.

The rook cage which did much valuable service in these pens, catching no less than 143 jackdaws, carrion crows and rooks during the last month or two, has now been transferred to the open laying pen: we hope it will carry on the good work there, for pheasant eggs lying in the open are quite irresistable to these birds. What an enormous number of eggs must have been lost in the old days, before the advent of the covered aviaries and movable laying pens.

One of several paintings of pheasants by Roland Green which hang in our office today is entitled "Proud of his Wives"—at least that is the title we gave it many years ago, when it was reproduced on the cover of our price list. It shows a cock pheasant, resplendent in his fine plumage, together with three hen pheasants, standing in a clearing near some woodland. When, a few days ago, I walked round the laying pens I could not help thinking of the caption to Roland Green's painting.

Although in the confinement and captivity of pens, somewhat alien no doubt to their natural habitat, the cock birds looked no less "proud of their wives"—and indeed why

Resplendent in his fine plumage.

should they? Admittedly the hen pheasant is more sombre in appearance, and she does not dazzle the eye like the cock bird; but for all that she is really no less beautiful in her own way; no less worthy of praise. As I watched both cock and hens running to and fro, I somehow felt that if he was "proud of his wives," they most certainly had a sneaking admiration for him; for after all, who can deny that fine feathers do make fine birds?

Some new egg baskets were delivered to us recently. They are made of English Somerset rod—part of a plant which, as its name implies, grows in Somerset, and is not unlike willow. During the war, a certain amount of a very similar plant was imported from the Argentine, as at that time much of the English rod was needed for the manufacture of airborne containers and suchlike, but now we rely almost entirely on our own supplies; the handles, however, are made of cane, all of which is imported. Some of these new baskets were buff, others white, their colour depending on the treatment of the rod itself. For the buff baskets, the rod is boiled before peeling, the colour matter in the peel acting as a dye for the rod itself. In the case of the white ones, the rod is peeled first and then boiled, the boiling being necessary to make the rod pliable.

Made By the Blind

How attractive the baskets looked, piled up as they were against a black barn, the sunlight shining on their "newness," and there are few people I think for whom baskets of any kind do not hold a certain fascination. I opened one; I knew that there would be nothing in it, but I just wanted to feel them, to hear the squeaking sound as the lid went back—and I thought, yes, that is all that those who make them *can* do, hear and feel—they can never see the finished article; for these baskets are made for us by the blind, beautifully made, too, and we are glad to be able to give them the work.

And I wished very much that they could see the pheasant and duck eggs which, carefully packed in wood-wool, are sent away in these baskets all over the world. But perhaps some of those people who receive them may, through the medium of these notes, appreciate not only the eggs but the baskets themselves. Such appreciation would be fair reward to those who can never see the result of their labours.

History of Grouse Shooting

(Continued from page 269)

and where it is the custom to walk them up or to shoot them over dogs, it may be impossible for this reason to reduce the stock within a safe limit. But this should not obtain where driving can be employed, and the birds can be brought within shot of the guns.

Other advantages of driving are the much greater variety of shots it affords, and the higher degree of skill and dexterity it requires to kill birds travelling at a high speed and on constantly differing lines of flight. It also puts the sport within the reach of moderately active persons, who would be physically unable to walk the distances the other methods of shooting usually involve.

The taxation which followed both wars, and the second in particular, changed very much the personnel of those who had previously shot over the larger estates, including many of the moors. Owners were unable to meet the increased cost of wages and other expenses, and therefore let their moors instead of entertaining their friends, or else they formed syndicates and retained one or two guns for themselves. As a result, far more individuals take part in grouse shooting than did so at the beginning of the century, and instead of a somewhat limited number killing thousands of grouse, many more are able to have a few days' shooting; and it would be right to say that most of them are well satisfied with the smaller number of birds they can kill.

The internal combustion engine is one of the recent developments which has had a beneficial effect upon grouse shooting. During the past thirty years out-of-the-way moors have become accessible, and the time taken to reach them has been reduced from hours to minutes by the use of modern cars. Not only this, but jeeps and Land Rovers can bring the guns, and all their equipment, lunches, etc., over miles of farm roads and moorland tracks right up to, or within easy reach of the butts. In days gone by it would have meant an hour's walk or more for the guns, or a slow ride on the back of a farm horse hired for the occasion.

Guns and Cartridges

It would not be right to end this review of grouse shooting without some reference to the weapons and ammunition which were in use during the hundred years it is intended to cover. Up to 1800 all sporting guns were muzzle-loaders with flint locks. Shortly afterwards the hammer gun, also a muzzle-loader, was brought out. The charge was exploded by the hammer striking a percussion cap of fulminate of mercury. Mention has already been made of the impetus given to the sport by the production of the first English breech-loader by Joseph Lang in 1853, a London gunmaker who started in business in 1821, and whose successors are amongst the leading gunsmiths of today. The charge loaded into this gun was contained in a cartridge from which a brass pin projected through the barrels, and it was fired by the hammer striking the top of the pin.

Altogether apart from the great saving in the time taken to load a gun in this way, instead of ramming powder and shot down the barrels, was the increased safety it gave. In the case of a muzzle-loader the person charging the gun held the ramrod directly above the barrels, one of which might still be loaded, and it is clear that a severe injury would be suffered, if for any reason either was discharged.

About 1861 cartridges with a cap in the centre of their base came into use, and subsequently they were fitted with a fulminate of mercury cap, as they are at the present time. About the same time guns were provided with extractors, and these made the removal of cartridges from the breech much easier.

Various improvements were made in the design of their guns by different makers, and it may be said that by 1875 the double-barrelled hammer gun had reached its highest point of development. It was at this stage that hammerless guns were first produced, and automatic ejectors by 1879. By 1895 guns with ejector mechanism were in general use. Damascus barrels were being replaced by steel, and the one and only black powder, which obscured the view with a fog of thick black smoke every time the gun was fired, was being driven from the field by the newly invented smokeless powders.

There have been no radical changes in sporting guns since then. Small improvements in design, some reduction in weight, and a greater variety of small bore weapons have engaged the energies of the leading makers of today. Fortunate is the man who can take his place in a butt with a well-made English gun on his arm, a bagful of modern cartridges by his side, and await the on-coming of one of the most sporting birds, either in their first freshness in the August sunshine, or when they have reached the height of their powers in the boisterous weather of a late autumn day.

Death of a Sussex Keeper

Mr. William Wakeford, of Byworth, near Petworth, died recently at St. Richards Hospital, Chichester, after a long illness. He was 91 years old and probably the oldest man in the Petworth district. He had lived at Egdean for many years, and in the Petworth district all his life. For more than forty years he was a gamekeeper on the Leconfield estate at Petworth.

Gundog News

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Herne Common, Herne Bay, Kent

IT is always interesting to hear of breeds other than the orthodox gundogs being used in the field and R.C. (Port Talbot), recently approached me regarding the training of his Bedlington terriers for this purpose I replied that I was unaware that the breed could be used as gundogs, having always thought that they were great fighters and killers and would, therefore, be unlikely to make successful retrievers. I must point out that my experience of dogs, other than the gundog breeds, is small, for I have always interested myself in the working side of dogs and have been inclined to write off breeds, other than gundogs or sheepdogs, as "beautiful but dumb"—and some of them not so beautiful at that. However, it appears that I was wrong in my estimation of the Bedlington terrier, and readers will be interested to read what R.C. has to say in reply to my invitation to write a few lines on the subject. He now writes as follows.

"It is with amazement that I learn that you have never handled a Bedlington terrier, and seemed surprised that they could be used as gundogs. Without doubt if more was made known of the advantages of this breed, I believe very many more would be used with the gun. You are of the opinion that they are fighters and biters. You are perfectly correct, due entirely to the fact that the majority are taught to kill at around three months of age. The favourite idea is to put a half-grown rat with the puppy in a barrel or railway truck. Once it will kill, foxes and even badgers are then worked for with the dogs going to ground. Thus they are brought up fighting and naturally enjoy it.

"I have one now which is about eight years old. He will dig an estate up after a rat, go through any cover you can find, and fight anything on four legs. Incidentally, I have many show cards with him, his sire being Ch. Lindum Lightning, *but* if taught carefully and with plenty of patience, they can be really fine dogs for the gun.

A Case in Point

"To point this factor out I can remember one called Joey, which would mark a rabbit on a seat, but instead of ordering "Up," we used to order "Fetch," and many a time he would catch his rabbit on the seat and retrieve.

"Put him to sit, drop the rabbit, allow it to take cover, and order him to "Fetch," and back he would come with it, not a hair out of place on it.

"Often I have heard the story of the Bedlington which was in the district many years ago, that would locate lapwings nests and retrieve eggs to hand. No dogs, I believe, have a better nose, and none works every "nook and cranny" better than this breed. They will enter the thickest of cover eagerly when trained.

"Let us briefly study this breed. Looks today must be good, and a well-kept and groomed Bedlington is a fine sight, its coat, if kept short, will not matt as most people believe. It is very small, can be kept with ease in the home, loves children. There is one really good point, it is the only breed of dog which does not shed its coat on clothes, carpets, etc. Its size gives it an advantage when retrieving from heavy cover, which the larger dogs cannot get into. Also its speed when retrieving wounded game really is helpful. Feeding costs are very low, due to its small appetite. The breed loves water and I remember one I had, called Rover, which would swim in the tide for hours, no matter what the weather. This dog was the finest I have ever used on partridges, he would literally scent them miles away.

Miss Lucy Ross's golden retriever, David of Westley, retrieving to Jimmy Cranston.

"I would really be as 'pleased as Punch' if you were to mention the word Bedlington in your article, as, believe me, there are more of this breed being used with guns than is realised by the labrador and spaniel specialists. Many of us are naturally disappointed that never is any publicity given to 'our' breed.

"One thing I have not mentioned, and that is I do not believe this breed should be asked to retrieve a good goose or the likes of it, as there is sense and reason in everything, and this I consider to be asking much too much of this small breed."

Next Season's Retriever Trials

Competition at retriever trials during the next season is going to be hot, and I also predict that we are going to see some very interesting and amusing incidents. So many handlers are suffering from lack of rabbits that it is reasonable to suppose that few of the younger dogs now being trained will have had any experience on them, except possibly in a pen at home which, although a valuable basis for steadiness-to-fur training, is not in itself sufficient to guarantee that a dog will remain steady in the field.

Although there will undoubtedly be many trials held on rabbit-less ground, there will be others where rabbits still exist, handlers will be more than ever on their toes to prevent catastrophes. I have no doubt that the lack of rabbits will mean that more birds are collected during a shooting day or a trial, for rabbits always prove a distraction to a dog searching for dead or wounded game, particularly in kale, roots and covert. In this one respect, myxomatosis may prove to be a blessing in disguise, but on the other hand many of the younger dogs will undoubtedly have had less experience of carrying "the real thing," most trainers relying upon rabbits to experience their dogs in this respect during the spring and summer months.

The existing situation may also prove beneficial in that it will encourage handlers to shoot more vermin birds for their dogs to retrieve than they have hitherto done, and game preservers will welcome this.

A Golden's Successes

It is becoming almost monotonous reporting the successes of Miss Lucy Ross's golden retriever dog David of Westley! My good friend Jimmy Cranston writes from Ireland that on Easter Monday he handled David at the Combined Canine Clubs Show and won best of breed with him. As David is already a Field Trial Champion, this award makes him a Dual Champion, the first Irish dog to achieve this distinction. This must have been as big a thrill for Jimmy as for Miss Ross, for he has handled David at all his trials and shows, and has been entirely responsible for his training and conditioning. Up to the end of last season he has had five firsts in open stakes and five seconds in open stakes, a diploma at the championship and two certificates of merit. These awards were gained in England, Scotland and Ireland, and I congratulate both Miss Ross and Jimmy Cranston upon their achievements.

With reference to the recent advertisement for Yestos "E," product of The English Grains Co., Ltd., the price should have read 75 tablets 4s., *not* 4s. 6d. as stated.

The Young Shot

(Continued from page 265)

fident, and then had the mortifying experience of seeing the approaching fowl turned wide out of gunshot by some ignorant, wandering shore-popper who knew no better and cared even less.

And if he fished, he must have had the undreamt of experience, being most careful to overhaul his tackle before each outing, of link swivels breaking and sound hooks straightening, of firm knots slipping and even of fish falling back into the water after they were landed.

Oh yes, there are many, many things that can go wrong before the bird, or beast or fish is safely in the bag, or the money is in the pocket, and although the careful sportsman can eliminate a great many hazards, he can never be absolutely certain of success.

Which, I suppose, all adds to his enjoyment of the game, providing that he realises and is philosophical about it.

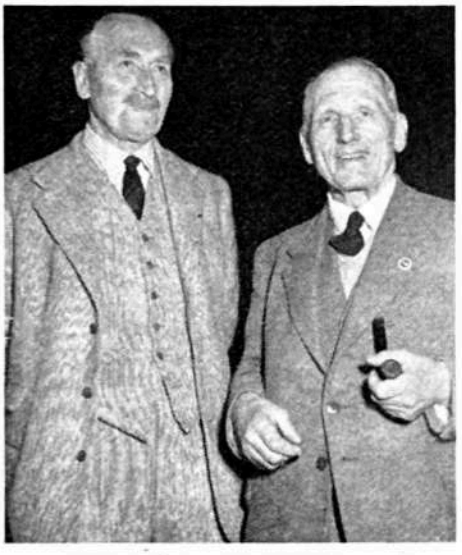
Wildfowling Clubs

The annual dinner of the Frodsham and District Wildfowlers' Club was a rather special affair. One hundred and thirty members and friends, including representatives of The Wildfowlers' Association and the Dee, Morecambe, Preston and Southport Clubs gathered to honour Mr. E. L. Parish and Dr. G. W. Storey, chairman and late secretary of The Wildfowlers' Association, who were largely responsible for the successful handling of the wildfowlers' interests during the passage through Parliament of the Protection of Birds Bill last year.

Dick Dawson, of The Golden Lion, Frodsham, was, as usual, in charge of the sluicing arrangements. He opened the flood gates soon after 7 p.m. and the company drifted happily into midstream, to come to anchor at 8 o'clock for "hash." Mr. R. Carstairs gave the toast to the visitors and an old friend, Mr. "Ivy" Irivine, responded. Both produced a few new ones which went well; no mean achievement during a drought of stories.

The chairman, Dr. James, introducing Mr. Parish and Dr. Storey, said that everyone would regret the absence of "Tim" Sedgwick, who also had worked tremendously hard for the cause and had been a tower of strength during the passage of the Bill. Unforseen circumstances had, at a late hour, prevented him from being present, but the gratitude of all members went out to him just the same.

Dr. James outlined the events which led to the



Major Oakey and Dr. H. H. James.

Protection of Birds Act, 1954, and stressed that had it not been for such doughty fighters as our two special guests, so ably supported amongst others by the redoubtable "Tim," wildfowling today might well be in very poor case indeed. Certainly its champions in Parliament would have been faced with a well nigh impossible task.

Attacks on the sport still threatened, however, and doubtless would come; it was, therefore, vital that all wildfowlers should remain alert and never flag in supporting The Wildfowlers' Association, whether through their own clubs or not. The danger was very real; it always would be.

The Frodsham Club was proud to have assisted in some small way in the building up of The Wildfowlers' Association; at that time, the only other active Club was the Morecambe Bay Association, always regarded by the Frodsham Club as its parent. The forming of many other clubs in recent years was most gratifying. It was to be hoped that all would continue to prosper and retain their enthusiasm.

Mr. Roger Withinshaw, the president, felt no need to enlarge on Dr. James' remarks, but added his tribute to Mr. Parish and Dr. Storey. It gave him, he said, great personal pleasure to ask them, on behalf of all members, each to accept an inscribed spirit flask in appreciation of their great work. He was sure that members and guests alike would wish to accord them the great reception they had so well earned. They did; the roof has since been repaired.

Mr. Parish and Dr. Storey expressed complete surprise at the presentations. They were most grateful for the gesture, whilst the gifts always would be cherished, not only from a personal angle but as a tribute to The Wildfowlers' Association, which they had been happy to serve. Dr. Storey regretted that professional duties had compelled him to relinquish the position of secretary, though he would continue to assist The Wildfowlers' Association in every possible way. The handling of the wildfowlers' case had been uphill work, but the results had, on the whole, justified the effort. The movement was fortunate in having Mr. Hirst as secretary; it was very good of him to take on the job. The company thought so too and showed it.

After dinner, Major Charles Oakey, who twice before had visited Frodsham, gave an address on safety in the field. He was thanked in typical style by Mr. H. C. Bennett. Hector was in great form, particularly when relating the anecdote of the gundog "salesman."

Arthur H. Waring, of Birkenhead, kindly took the photographs. Arthur can always be relied upon to rally round.

A memorable evening, and so, for some of us, was the next day!

• • •

A meeting of The Fenland Wildfowlers' Association was held in April at The Five Bells, Norfolk Street, with Mr. Norman in the chair. The secretary, Mr. R. Butt, reported the arrival of 100 mallard eggs to be hatched and the birds released in the autumn. It was hoped to hold clay pigeon shoots through the summer.

Members then heard a lecture by Mr. Nesbitt, president of the Cambridge Bird Club on "Wildfowl Counts." Mr. Watson proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Nesbitt for a very interesting lecture on the movement of wildfowl. A general discussion with Mr. Nesbitt then followed until the close of the meeting.

• • •

The Wells and District Wildfowlers' Club have held and are holding clay pigeon shoots on the East Hills, Wells at 3 p.m. on Easter Monday; May 14; June 11; July 9; August 6; September 17. Each day there will be a 20-bird shoot—10 skeet, 5 down-the-line, 5 high. Entrance fee 1s. 6d. All guns who are present at three shoots or more will qualify for the aggregate prize, which will be won by the gun with the three highest scores. A Club cup, on handicap, will be shot for on one other day. Transport to the East Hills will be provided by members in their boats from the Scredge. Last boat leaves at 2.40 p.m. Gum boots are recommended.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Fixture List

April 30: Sussex Down-the-Line Championship at Goodwood, Nr. Chichester, Sussex.

Apr. 30: South Wales D.T.L. Championship, organised by the Welsh C.P.S.A.

May 1: Harrogate G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot, 1.45 p.m.

May 1: Surrey D.T.L. Championship, Bisley G.C., Brookwood, 10.30 a.m.

May 1: Moving Target Rifle Trial Shoot, in conjunction with Bisley Gun Club. Visitors welcome.

May 4: Droitwich G.C., Hanbury Wharf. Practice Shoot, 7 p.m.

May 6 and 7: 23rd Annual British Open Sporting Championship (organised by the C.P.S.A.), West London Shooting Grounds, Northolt, Greenford, Middlesex, 9.30 a.m.

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Reports and Results

There were 35 guns for the Bisley Gun Club shoot on April 3, when Club members and five visitors enjoyed a full day's shooting under fairly good conditions. A. J. Beal was an easy winner of the High Gun competition with 93/100, and B. H. Caesar was second with 90/100, and R. A. Denham third with 86/100. Messrs. R. T. Akers and G. Purser were equal firsts in the handicap list and after a tie shoot R. T. Akers was declared the winner, and T. G. Dennett took third prize. J. A. Baigent shared the prize in the 25 bird sweep which followed the main event, and J. A. Baigment was also the winner of the Caesar competition, run on this occasion by Mr. H. W. Tidd, by correctly forecasting the number of actual kills made in the main event of the day.

Mrs. Purser very kindly distributed the prizes, and also handed the Bisley Gun Club Championship Shield to F. T. Moore who had not been present when the result of this aggregate shoot had been announced. Mrs. Purser was accorded the usual cheers and "whisper" on the call of the Club president who had proposed the vote of thanks.

At the close of the shoot, Mr. F. T. Moore kindly entertained the committee to tea, after which there was a committee meeting. Among points discussed was the question of the possibility of a second trap on the range, and this matter is being taken up with the N.R.A. officials. It was decided to continue with the present method of prizes in the high gun and the handicap classes, and not to change over to A, B and C classes. The catering question was also discussed, and all members will receive letters about this important matter, and with a programme for the rest of the year, prior to the next shoot, which is the one for the Surrey Area Down-the-Line Challenge Shield. It is on Sunday, May 1, and this will be followed on May 15 by the first leg of the Challenge Matches with the Blandford Gun Club, when Blandford pay their annual visit to Bisley.

• • •

The Waltham Abbey Gun Club held their first meeting this season on March 26, when members were pleased to welcome their president, Mr. W. Donald Bedford, M.D., and in spite of the inclement weather 34 guns enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon.

Owing to the two skeet lay-outs, members were able to shoot two rounds of skeet and 25 birds down-the-line. Some good scores were made. Mrs. M. Kidwill scored 17 at skeet. Messrs. W. G. Flske, J. Kidwill, W. Lees and G. E. Tuck each killed 19 birds. The catering was carried out by Mrs. Ellen Tuck, in her usual splendid manner. Several new members were enrolled, and the club extends a hearty welcome to all.

• • •

The Yorkshire Down-the-Line Championship was held at Harrogate Gun Club on April 17, in dull weather, with a cold east wind blowing into the traps. The event was points scoring, and some fine shooting was witnessed by the 32 guns taking part and the many spectators. The winner was J. Wheater with 100 x 100 kills, 194 points. G. Jones was second with 199 points.

Shooting the Rook

(Continued from page 266)

the writer's opinion it is only a few degrees above the inedible). It is usual to help out the flavour by adding generous quantities of steak, mushrooms, and onions, and when so prepared, a rook pie is eatable at least once in the year. There is not much meat on a young rook, and only the breasts are used. They should be removed with a sharp knife or razor-blade as soon as possible, for the meat will acquire a slightly bitter flavour if there is much delay. It is customary to allow five or six birds to each portion.

Snow in early April may chill the eggs and cause the birds to lay a second clutch that will mature several weeks late. In this case the young birds may easily be unnoticed in full-leaved trees. Late birds are seldom shot, and it is probable (from the rooks' point of view) that these retarded broods are the most successful. In a normal season there is generally a race in development between the young birds and the leaves, and the success of the shoot largely depends on which matures first. If the leaves are early then only one day will make the branchers almost invisible in oaks or sycamores, but they will be easily seen in elm or ash trees. Where they nest in Scots pines the birds are almost unshootable until they take to wing.

Jackdaws sometimes figure in the bag when they nest in a rookery, but they usually build in ruins, towers, and cliffs where shooting at the non-flying stage is difficult or impossible, and they provide a very pretty problem for the Pests Officer where they are very numerous. Jackdaws abound in the Mendip area of Somerset, and their nests in the high Cheddar cliffs are impregnable, and the young birds unshootable compared with rooks. On more accessible sites, however, jackdaws provide difficult and very sporting targets that will tax the skill of the expert performer at high pheasants. Eddies and air currents over the cliff face make the birds fly at every possible speed from very fast to dead stop.

CLAY PIGEON SHOOTS

TO BE HELD DURING

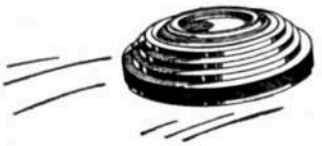
MAY (See also page iii cover) 1955

CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING

THE 23rd ANNUAL

OPEN SPORTING CHAMPIONSHIP

OF GREAT BRITAIN



Walkers Parker Event - Ladies' and Colts Championships - Etc.

will be held by the C.P.S.A. at

The West London Shooting Grounds

NORTHOLT, GREENFORD, MIDDLESEX

on Friday and Saturday, 6th and 7th MAY, 1955

SPECIAL NOTICE.—The Organising Committee regret that, owing to an exceptionally heavy entry, no further entries can be accepted for either day from shooters who have not already entered by post.

There will be Pool Shooting (unlimited entry) on both days of the Meeting

H. Rogers, Hon. Secretary, The Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, 276 Whitchurch Lane, Edgware, Middlesex

THE NORFOLK SHOOTING GROUND TAVERHAM, NORWICH

PROGRAMME FOR 1955

THURSDAY, 19th MAY

NORFOLK DOWN THE LINE CHAMPIONSHIP

(I.C.I. Challenge Shield and Medal and Novice Prize for Norfolk Residents)
ALSO OPEN EVENT FOR MONEY PRIZES

THURSDAY, 21st JULY

NORFOLK SPORTING CHAMPIONSHIP

(I.C.I. Challenge Shield and Medal and Novice Prize for Norfolk residents)
ALSO OPEN EVENT FOR MONEY PRIZES

SPECTATORS WELCOME

Entries and particulars from:

C. S. Rosson & Co. Ltd., Bedford St., Norwich Phone Norwich 21241/2

THE BIRMINGHAM GUN CLUB

Announce

THE MIDLANDS SKEET CHAMPIONSHIP

Open to Residents of Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire & Gloucestershire

SATURDAY, MAY 14th, at 11 a.m.

I.C.I. SHIELD AND MEDAL - NOVICE CUP AND CASH PRIZES

Details from: A. E. JOHNSON, 33 ALCESTER STREET, REDDITCH

BISLEY GUN CLUB

BISLEY CAMP RANGES - Nr. WOKING - SURREY

SUNDAY, MAY 1st: Surrey Area Down the Line Championship. 10.30 a.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 15th: Bisley Gun Club v. Blandford Gun Club; first leg. 10.30 a.m.

SECRETARY: F. MARTIN, LEATHERHEAD COURT, SURREY

LONDON GUN CLUB

MAY 28th, 1955, at 11 a.m.

LONDON & MIDDLESEX DOWN-THE-LINE CHAMPIONSHIP, over 50 birds. Confined to residents.

WHITE CITY CUP AND £10 CASH. Open to all. Over 100 birds.

CHIPPERFIELD INTER-TEAM CHALLENGE TROPHY. Open to teams of five from Affiliated Clubs.

LONDON GUN CLUB OPEN EVENT, in conjunction with above events. Open to all. Over 50 birds. Classes A, B and C according to known ability. Three prizes in each class, cash or kind, to choice.

•

ADDITIONAL SWEEPSTAKE OVER 100 BIRDS

All cash taken for sweepstake returnable to prizewinners

•

To preserve the equality of competition, only cartridges purchased on ground allowed

•

REFRESHMENTS ALL DAY

Come and have a 100 Birds on site of 1955 English Open Down-The-Line Championship, to be held on June 3rd & 4th - Points Scoring: 2 & 1

Entries to Hon. Sec., L. H. Willis, 24 The Common, Ealing, W.5
Telephone Ealing 3865, or on ground till 12 noon

Eastbourne Gun Club

CHILVER BRIDGE FARM • near Berwick Station

(New Ground—same as 1954).

PROGRAMME FOR 1955

Saturday, May 21st – 1 o'clock prompt

SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND SKEET CHAMPIONSHIP. (I.C.I. Challenge Shield and Medal and Novice Prize for residents in Kent, Sussex and Surrey.)

Also Open Events for Prizes.

Saturday, August 6th – 2 o'clock prompt

OPEN SKEET MEETING. ALL WELCOME.

Novices' and Class Prizes.

For full particulars apply to the Hon. Secretary:

F. HOWELL - 11 Meads Street - Eastbourne - Sussex

'Phone: EASTBOURNE 5731

WEST PINCHBECK GUN CLUB

CLAY PIGEON SHOOT

GLENSIDE - WEST PINCHBECK - Nr. SPALDING - LINCS

Saturday, 14th May, 1955 • Commencing at 2 p.m.

Open Down the Line Lincolnshire Championship

Over 50 Birds for Challenge Cup and Good Prizes

Residential Down the Line Championship for I.C.I. Shield and Medal

Open Novice Down the Line Championship for Shield and Plaque

Open 10 Bird Down the Line — 3 Good Prizes

Open 10 Bird Skeet — 3 Good Prizes

Cartridges & Refreshments supplied on Ground H. W. Chappell, Hon. Sec.

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GUN repairs, overhauls, conversions ; moderate charges ; quality workmanship. G. E. Lewis and Sons, Gunmakers, Lower Loveday Street, Birmingham 19. Established 1850.

GUNS, hammer and hammerless. Lowest possible prices. Repairs of all kinds. Guns rebored, shooting improved, new barrels fitted, new stocks. Guns cleaned and overhauled. Stored in specially heated rooms and insured till wanted. Send to William Ford, Gunmaker, St. Mary's Row, Birmingham.

FOR SALE

BELGIAN .410 29in. single barrel, full choke; slight pitting; good sound condition; folding gun, £5; bargain.—Box A.2059.

CLAY TARGETS £5.5.0 per cylinder of 770 ex works, plus cylinder deposit of £2.0.0. The Gun Club Limited, Gun Club Works, Crayford, Kent.

FOR SALE: Czech BRNO Hornet, Cal. .22in Magazine Repeater Rifle, ordinary and hair trigger, unused, with 500 rounds ammunition, £33. Seen London area.—Box A.2058.

L. H. WILLIS has a grand selection of game, wildfowl and clay pigeon guns, any of which may be seen on the occasion of The Sporting Championship, May 6th and 7th, at Northolt, by arrangement.—L. H. Willis, 24 The Common, Ealing, W.5. Ealing 3865.

MERKEL 16-bore U.O., raised rib, pheasants and duck; pistol grip; cheek pad; solid L.o'.M., £65.—64 Borough Road, Altrincham. Tel. 4648.

NEW Remington 512, 2½x Scope, cross hairs, int. adjustments, screwed for silencer, Sportarget sling, £27.10.0. — Ford, " Haven Hail," Midwood Avenue, Bournemouth.

SPECIAL OFFER: 12-bore ex-Govt. cartridges, No. 7 shot, loaded for skeet shooting ; a mild load for all-round summer use ; packed in airtight tin-lined ammunition boxes, each containing 160 ; carriage paid in 800 lots (5 boxes x 160) at 35/- per 100 ; quotations for quantities; send for price list; Hercules Armament Co., Ltd., 8 St. Martin's Street, London, W.C.2.

12-BORE ex-Govt. Cartridges, No. 6 shot, packed in tin-lined wood boxes, each containing 400; suitable vermin and clay targets; carriage paid on 800 cartridges or more at 35/- per 100; special rates for quantities.—John Dickson & Son, 21 Frederick Street, Edinburgh.

WANTED

ANTIQUE pistols, revolvers (especially Colts), guns, gunpowder flasks, cap dispensers, game tellers, wanted for collection.—Dennis, 28 Langley Road, Slough.

WANTED: Sound, cheap breach loading 4-bore, would consider good 7-8-bore.—Anderson, Southern Waters, Branksea Avenue, Hamworthy, Poole.

WANTED: 12-bore hammerless ejector, preferably 26-in. barrels. —Particulars: Strachan, Salisbury Avenue, Goole, Yorkshire.

WANTED: Leather leg-of-mutton case for 25in. 12-bore gun.—Davies, 23 West Road, Bishop Auckland.

DOGS

B/W COCKER dog, born 30-7-'54 by F.T. Champion Merlin Lucky, ex showbred bitch by Blare of Broomleaf, natural retriever, very quick, intelligent, good disposition.—Percival, 39 Queensway, West Wickham, Kent.

ENGLISH SPRINGER puppies, born 5-2-'55; liver and white, well marked. Sire: Harpersbrook Teazle, dam, Greedypark Gypsy (F.T.Ch. Micklewood Scud x F.T.Ch. Ludlow Gyp). These are strong pups; should make F.T. or excellent gundogs. — Longton, 396 Bolton Road, Darwen, Lancs. 'Phone Darwen 1074.

FOR SALE: Black Labrador puppies; excellent gun breed; pedigree. Dogs 10gns., bitches 8gns.—Viscountess Morpeth, Ganthorpe Hall, Terrington, York. Phone Coneythorpe 61.

GUNDOGS TRAINED. Boarders accommodated, trained gundogs for sale. Bench-winners and workers at stud.—Topham, Upsall, Thirsk, Yorks.

SPRINGER BITCH, L. & W.; registered; 9 months; part-trained; sire 4 field trials; make first-class gun dog.—Webster, Lemington Manor, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos. Telephone 2.

KEEPER requires curly-coated Retriever pup, ready to train; must be from good working parents.—M.G.M., Wood House, Nocton, Nr. Lincoln.

PEDIGREE Black Labrador dog puppies, excellent working mother; 8 gns.—Gill, 77 Cross Green, Otley, Yorkshire.

SALE: Sensible retriever bitch steady with working terrier, hunts with method; seen at any time.—'Phone Lutterworth 9344.

WEIMARANER. Dual purpose. Two young dogs for sale, 11 months old. One waiting to go to trainer. One trained and entered in April pointer trials; 4-year-old brood bitch; retrieves beautifully, had one excellent litter only; a gift at £40.—Richardson, The Gorse, Uckington, Cheltenham.

AT STUD

AT STUD : A black Labrador F.T.Ch., Galleywood Swift ; sire, Int. F.T.Ch. Treveilyr Swift ; dam, Staindrop Winkie. Five of Swift's litter won firsts at Field Trials. Fee, £15.15.0, includes return carriage. Stud card on application.—Lawrence Taylor, Galleywood, Chelmsford. Tel. Chelmsford 3021.

PHEASANTS, WILD DUCK

PHEASANT and Wild Duck eggs for sale.—L. Kent, Game Farm, Chrishall, Royston, Herts. Tel.: Chrishall 204.

PHEASANTS and Wild Duck, cock and hen pheasants from the laying pens in early June. 12-13 week old cock poults end of August and in September. — M. Dwight, The Pheasantries, Berkhamsted, Herts. 'Phone Berkhamsted 312.

PHEASANT EGGS, day-old chicks and Poults for sale from first-class virile stock at reasonable prices.—John T. Hoyles, Fiveacres, Ashley Green, Bucks. 'Phone Berkhamsted 753.

SITUATIONS VACANT

The engagement of persons answering these advertisements must be made through a Local Office of the Ministry of Labour or a Scheduled Employment Agency if the applicant is a man aged 18-64 inclusive or a woman aged 18-59 inclusive unless he or she, or the employment, is excepted from the provisions of the Notification of Vacancies Order, 1952.

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AMERICA'S famous " Shooter's Bible," 1955 Edition now available, 17/6, post free.—Willen Ltd., 101 Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.

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BOOKS ON SHOOTING by Noel Sedgwick: "With Gun on Saltings and Stubble," 15/6; " A Shooting Man's Year," 15/6; " Wildfowling and Rough Shooting," 15/6; " With Dog and Gun," 18/6; " Shooting Round the Year," 18/6; " Shooting Wildfowl and Game," 10/-. These prices include postage. Order from The Burlington Publishing Company, 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1.

" THE ART OF SHOOTING " by Charles Lancaster may be obtained from " The Shooting Times," 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. Price 13/2 including postage.

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MAY (Continued from page 275) 1955

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In addition: I.C.I. Challenge Shield, Medal and Novice Prize
SHOOTING TO COMMENCE 1 p.m.
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JULY 17: North of England Skeet Championship
AUGUST 21: North of England Sporting Championship (not 22nd, as previously stated)
SEPTEMBER 4: Yorkshire Club Sporting Championship
Any further details from:
A. H. RIDDELL, Hon. Secretary, Harrogate Gun Club - Telephone: 6274

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MAY 14th
THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES DOWN-THE-LINE CHAMPIONSHIP
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WEST OF ENGLAND DOUBLE RISE CHAMPIONSHIP
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